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SECOND MAR. NUMBER

FEB. 20, 1929

The Popular

MAGAZINE

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Franklin
Schoonover

Missing Page

Inside front cover

Electrical Experts are in Big Demand!
—L.L. Cooke!

I Will Train You at Home to fill a Big Pay Job!



L. L. COOKE
Chief Engineer

It's a shame for you to earn \$15 or \$20 or \$30 a week, when in the same six days as an Electrical Expert you could make \$70 to \$200 — and do it easier — not work half so hard. Why then remain in the small-pay game, in a line of work that offers no chance, no big promotion, no big income? Fit yourself for a real job in the great electrical industry. I'll show you how.

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"Thanks to your interesting Course I made over \$700 in 24 days in Radio. Of course, this is a little above the average but I run from \$10 to \$40 clear profit every day; you can see what your training has done for me."

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\$70 to \$30 a Week for Jacquot

"Now I am specializing in autoelectricity and battery work and make from \$70 to \$30 a week and am just getting started. I don't believe there is another school in the world like yours. Your lessons are a real joy to study."

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A. SCHRECK,
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"When I began with you I was just a common laborer, going from one job to another, working for anything I could get, and that wasn't much. Now my salary is \$3,500 a year and the Company furnishes me with an automobile."

C. O. BECKETT,
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New Lexington, Ohio

LEARN TO BE AN ELECTRICAL EXPERT Earn \$3,500 to \$10,000 a Year

Today even the ordinary Electrician — the "screw driver" kind — is making money — big money. But it's the trained man — the man who knows the ways and whereof of Electricity — the Electrical Expert — who is picked out to "boss" the ordinary Electricians — to boss the Big Jobs — the jobs that pay \$3,500 to \$10,000 a Year. Get in line for one of these "Big Jobs." Start by enrolling now for my easily learned, quickly grasped, right-up-to-the-minute, Spare-Time Home-Study Course in Practical Electricity.

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Volume XCV

Number 1

TWICE-A-MONTH
The Popular
Magazine

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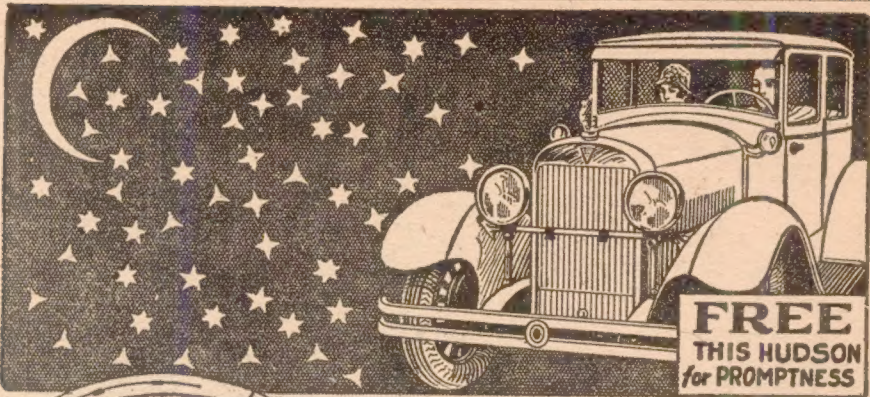
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THIS IS NOT A MAGAZINE CONTEST

Anyone Who Can Solve Puzzles May Win

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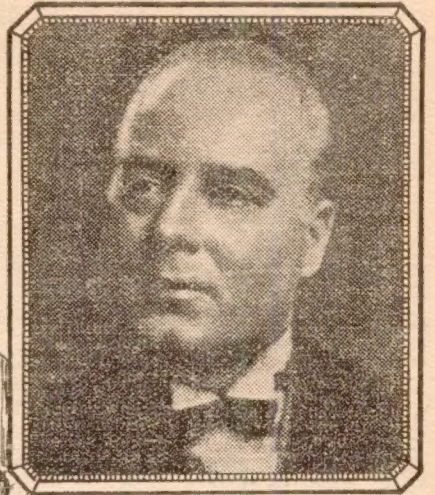


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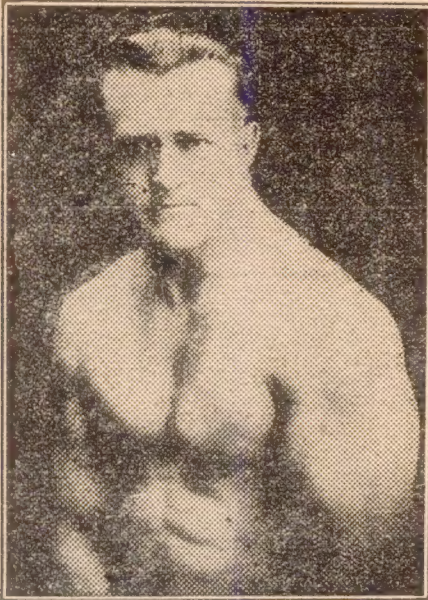
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SAVED

Thank your lucky stars you have another man inside of you. He's the human dynamo. He fills you full of pep and ambition. He keeps you alive—on fire. He urges you on in your daily tasks. He makes you strive for bigger and better things to do. He makes you crave for life and strength. He teaches you that the weak fall by the wayside, but the strong succeed. He shows you that exercise builds live tissue—live tissue is muscle—muscle means strength—strength is power. Power brings success! That's what you want, and gosh darn your old hide you're going to get it!

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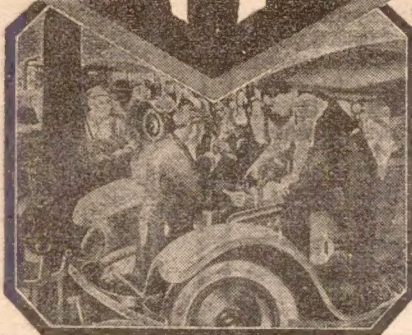
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WHEN a man who has been struggling along at a low-pay job suddenly steps out and commences to earn real money—\$5000, \$7500, or \$10,000 a year—he usually gives his friends quite a shock. It's hard for them to believe he is the same man they used to know . . . but such things happen much more frequently than most people realize. Not only one, but **HUNDREDS** have altered the whole course of their lives after reading the amazing book illustrated at the right.

True, it is only a book—just seven ounces of paper and printer's ink—but it contains the most vivid and inspiring message that any ambitious man can read! It reveals facts and secrets that will open almost any man's eyes to things he has never even dreamed of!

Remarkable Salary Increases

For example, R. B. Hansen of Akron, Ohio, is just one case. Not long ago he was a foreman in the rubber-curing room of a big factory at a salary of \$160 a month. One day his remarkable volume, "Secrets of Modern, Dynamic Salesmanship," fell into his hands. And from that day on, Mr. Hansen clearly saw the way to say "good-bye" forever to low pay, long hours, and tiresome routine! Today he has reaped the rewards that this little volume placed within his reach. His salary runs well into the 5-figure class—actually exceeding \$10,000 a year!

Another man, Wm. Shore of Neenach, California, was a cowboy when he sent for "Secrets of Modern, Dynamic Salesmanship." Now he is a star salesman making as high as \$525 in a single week. O. D. Oliver of Norman, Oklahoma, read it and jumped from \$200 a month to over \$10,000 a year! C. V. Champion of Danville, Illinois, raised his salary to over \$10,000 a year and became President of his company in the bargain!

Your Income Multiplied Or You Pay Nothing

N.S.T.A. is now offering, to every man who wants to increase his income, an amazing Double Money-Back Bond that assures you a definite stipulated addition to your income, within three months after your training is completed—or the course costs you nothing. This daring offer is possible only because of the success of thousands of members. Remember, if you are really ambitious to increase your earnings, this opportunity is offered you by a million dollar institution, the oldest and largest of its kind in the world. Send coupon immediately for full details.

A Few Weeks—Then Bigger Pay

There was nothing "different" about any of these men when they started. None of them had any special advantages—although all of them realized that **SAL. ESMANSHIP** offers bigger rewards than any other profession under the sun. But, like many other men, they subscribed to the foolish belief that successful salesmen are born with some sort of "magic gift." "Secrets of Modern, Dynamic Salesmanship" showed them that nothing could be farther away from the truth! Salesmanship is just like any other profession. It has certain fundamental rules and laws—laws that you can master as easily as you learned the alphabet.

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Get Your Machine FREE

Live wire salesmen are dropping everything else and flocking to Ve-Po-Ad. Ve-Po-Ad brings them quick money and lots of it. Shapiro out in California made \$475 in one week! You can "clean up" too! Only 10 sales a day in spare time will bring YOU over \$36.00 a week! You need no previous sales experience—Ve-Po-Ad sells itself! If you are really interested in earning a steady, substantial income, write at once for full details of my **MONEY-MAKING PLAN** and **FREE VE-PO-AD** given to new Agents. Do it NOW—TODAY!

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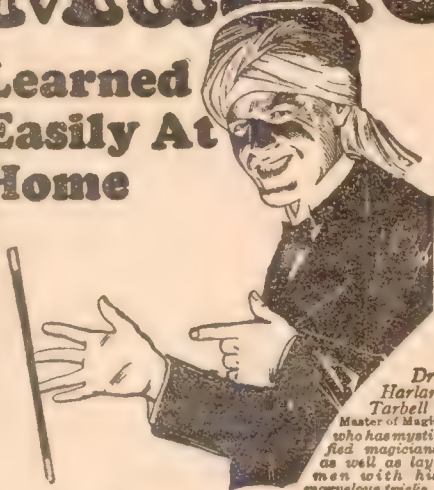
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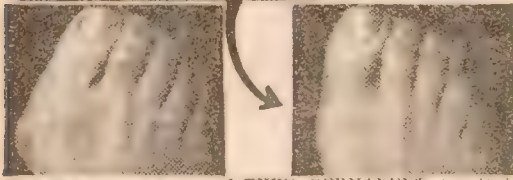
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| 28x2 1/2 | 4.75 | 2.25 | 28x2 1/2 | 4.75 | 2.25 |
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| 28x2 1/8 | 5.25 | 2.75 | 28x2 1/8 | 5.25 | 2.75 |
| 28x2 | 5.55 | 3.00 | 28x2 | 5.55 | 3.00 |
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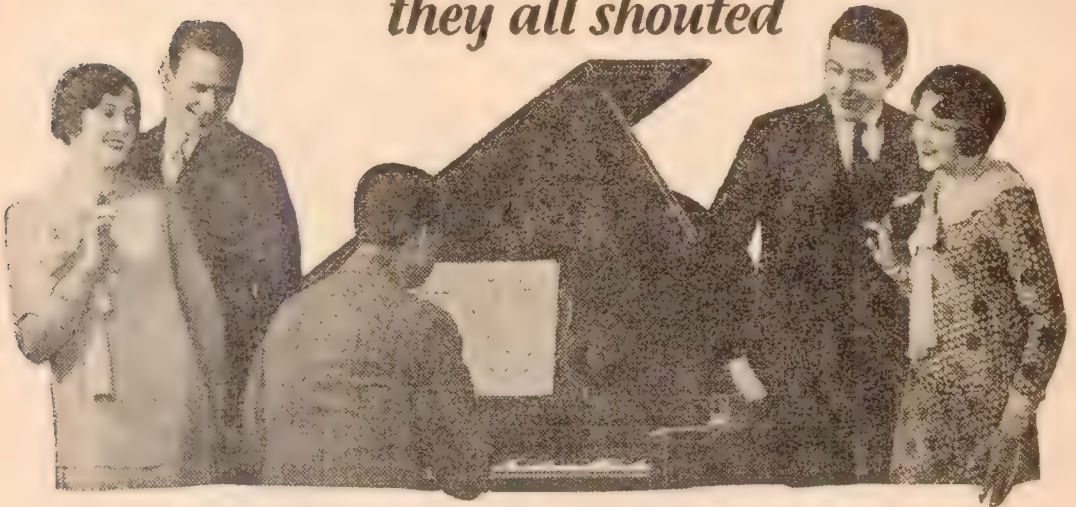


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but my revenge was sweet!

"NOW that everyone is here, let's tune in on a good station and get some snappy dance music."

Olive Murray was full of pep as she adjusted the dials of her radio. "Shucks," she said as she discovered someone making a speech. "Let's try another station."

But there wasn't a note of dance music on the air. "Something like this *could* happen the night of my party," she moaned. "Never mind, there'll be a good orchestra on at 10:30."

You could see disappointment written all over the guests' faces. Suddenly I bucked up my courage and took Olive aside.

"What's the piano closed for?" I asked.

"Why not? No one here plays. I only wish somebody could play, though."

"I'll try to fill in for a while, Olive."

"You're joshing, Dick! You never played before at parties."

"That's right, Olive, but I'll play to-night," I assured her.

I could tell she didn't believe me. And what a roar the crowd let out when I sat down.

"He can't play," called out a voice good-naturedly from the rear. "Let's turn on the radio and listen to the speeches."

"Sure," added one of my friends, "I know that he can't tell one

note from another. It's all a lot of Greek to him."

I said nothing. But my fingers were itching to play.

"Give him a chance," said Olive, "maybe he can play."

A Dramatic Moment

That settled it. There was no maybe about it. I played through the first bars of Strauss' immortal Blue Danube Waltz. A tense silence fell on the guests as I continued. Suddenly I switched from classical music to the syncopated tunes from "Good News." Everyone started to dance. They forgot all about the radio. But soon, of course, they insisted that I tell them all about my new accomplishment. Where I had learned . . . when I had learned . . . how?

The Secret

"Have you ever heard of the U. S. School of Music?" I asked.

A few of my friends nodded. "That's a correspondence school, isn't it?" they exclaimed.

"Exactly," I replied. "They have a surprisingly easy method through which you can learn to play any instrument without a teacher."

"It doesn't seem possible," someone said.

"That's what I thought, too. But the Free Demonstration Lesson which they mailed me on request so opened my eyes that I sent for the complete course."

"It was simply wonderful—no laborious scales—no heartless exercises—no tiresome practising. My fear of notes disappeared at the very beginning. As the lessons came they got easier and easier."

Then I told them how I had always longed to sit down at the piano and play some old sweet song—or perhaps a beautiful classic, a bit from an opera or the latest syncopation—how when I heard others playing I envied them so that it almost spoiled the pleasure of the music for me.

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THE RED-LACQUER BOX

By Robert McBlair

To Tony Bruce, at his fine old log house on the Virginia coast, one summer night brought mystery and drama enough to last a lifetime.

CHAPTER I.

BAD BLOOD.

THE knocking sounded again on his office door, making the glass rattle. Young Anthony Bruce plowed his fingers impatiently through his light-brown hair and raised his ruddy countenance from the telegram

he had been composing. His gray eyes fastened themselves upon the shadow of the big fist striking against the frosted glass.

All day, since receiving the anonymous telephone call, asking him if his home at Heather Bay was for sale, he had experienced a curious feeling of uneasiness. The knocking at the door

tended to add to it. But business hours were over, he was in a hurry to get home before the storm, and at the moment he was in no mood to be interrupted.

He returned to the telegraph blank, on which he had written, "Miss Elinor Chase, Richmond, Virginia," and a street address. The memory of the girl's dark eyes rose before him, and he added:

"Have been trying to get you by telephone to call off our week-end party at Heather Bay. Mrs. Sanders is away and the Fosters ill. Have been looking forward to seeing you."

He scratched out "seeing you" and substituted "getting a good gang together." It wouldn't do to let her know how much he really had been looking forward to seeing her. So far as he could observe, she had never shown any signs of preferring him over Hardy Graves, and Graves was successful and wealthy, while he, himself, was so far doing little better than making both ends meet.

He was chewing his pencil over this when the doorknob was rattled, and suddenly, evidently to the surprise of the rattler, a man catapulted into the little one-room office and drew up with a lurch, still holding onto the doorknob.

Anthony Bruce, scowling up from his desk, and the surprised intruder stared silently at each other for a moment. The visitor wore a knitted skull-cap which held the oily brass-colored hair back from his weather-reddened and narrow forehead. A sweat-stained maroon sweater was glued to his deep chest and muscular shoulders, while old trousers, stiff with grease and dirt, fell to shoes caked with the dried gray mud of an oyster-shell road. His brutal face showed directness and independence.

"So you are in, eh?" he cried, and laughed scornfully, as if he had caught the other in some cowardly deception. "Didn't you hear me knock?"

His yellow-gray eyes were close-set beside the heavy bony nose; the yellow stubble on the gaunt jaw, the weather-beaten cheek bones, the oily glint of his red skin, were no more pleasing than was the reek of sweat and brine which accompanied him. But a close observer might have seen some resemblance between him and the clean-cut young man at the desk.

"What do you want, Fagot?" asked Anthony Bruce.

"Oh, you know me, do you? By God, now, that's good! You don't speak to me when we pass each other on the road, down in the country, and I thought you didn't know who I was. But I see that you can call me by my name!"

"I know who you are," said Bruce. "You are Denby Fagot. I know your brother, Isaac."

"You're damn right you know him! Five years ago, you ordered him off your land like he was a dog."

"He was shooting ducks out of season," replied Bruce, "and he can't do that around my place. What do you want?"

"That ain't the reason," said Fagot, pointing a big, grimy finger; "you think you're better than we are—that's what the trouble is." He came unsteadily closer, the odor of corn whisky heavy on his breath. "You inherited the old man's money, and his house and land, and you think you're better than us, just like he wasn't my grandfather just the same as he was yours."

"Oh, I know what you would have to say to that!" he went on, waving a hand as if he were being interrupted. "You'd say I come down from his second wife, who wasn't much shakes! You'd say my mother was her daughter, and to make it worse, run off with old Ike Fagot, the moonshiner who got killed by the sheriff. Now I tell you, old Ike Fagot was a good, honest guy, and a good-looking feller when ma married

him; and I tell you I'm just as good—hic!—I'm just as good as you are the longest day you ever lived!"

"I haven't said anything about your ancestors or you," replied Bruce. "You've put words in my mouth. And I have nothing against you or your brother. It is true we had the same grandfather——"

"You're damn right it's true," said Fagot. His face flushed from unaccustomed oratory, he leaned upon the desk for balance, and his close-set yellow-gray eyes were a bit splayed apart, as if each of them were trying to recover the thread of the argument. "And Heather Bay, if you die, comes to us."

"That's right—if I die without issue."

"Without what?"

"Without children."

"That's right. Now, let's sit down and talk," Fagot said, looking about and sinking into a chair.

"I was saying," Bruce went on impatiently, "that any quarrel between the two—er—families, arose when my father had a falling out with his half sister, who was your mother. That's an old story, and none of my affair. It's getting late now, and I wish you'd tell me your business and get it over with."

"If you die," repeated Denby Fagot, "Heather Bay comes to us." His close-set eyes examined the young man at the desk, from the laced-leather engineer's boots up to the ruddy face and tousled light-brown hair, as if weighing some speculation. "And people do die, you know." He shut one eye in a confidential and cunning grimace. "They go duck hunting, and a gun goes off accidentally. Oh, there's plenty of ways!"

"What the devil are you talking about? Are you threatening me? I don't let any man threaten me, Fagot."

Anthony Bruce was leaning forward in his chair. His face, flushed with anger, showed more now than before the resemblance to the other. His eyes,

however, were a clear gray and set rather wide apart, and their expression, instead of being cunning, was direct and open.

"Threaten you?" asked Fagot in drunken surprise. "Why, that's just what I ain't doing! If I was going to threaten your life, you think I would tell you about it?"

Bruce leaned back and laughed briefly.

"Well, then, what do you want?" he demanded. "I've got to drive all the way down to Heather Bay for dinner, and I've got things to do first. The weather looks nasty and I'd rather get there before the storm. Now, what is it?"

"That's just it," continued Fagot—"not to threaten you. Especially not loud, where anybody could hear; and there are people passing along that hall out there, going home, all the time now. Oh, I ain't as drunk as you think I am! No, sir! Me and Isaac decided on that, and it's going to be strictly business. I admit I stopped in somewhere on the way here, and perhaps I shouldn't of, but I'm as sober as a wet skunk. Now, here it is—and that's that!"

He had begun working his big hand up under the maroon sweater. He grasped something, and as it wouldn't come loose easily, brought it free with a ripping sound. His hand emerged with a flat packet wrapped in oiled canvas which he laid upon the desk and clumsily unfolded, disclosing a pile of United States paper money half an inch thick.

"Count 'em," said Fagot.

"I have no reason for counting them," replied Bruce.

"They are yours," said Fagot insistently. "There's ten thousand dollars there. We're buying Heather Bay."

Bruce's teeth gleamed in a smile.

"Why, if I took that in payment for Heather Bay, I wouldn't get much for myself. The place is mortgaged up to

the hilt and most of that would go on the mortgage, assuming I wanted to sell."

"To hell with that argument," said Fagot. "We'll pay you five thousand dollars more than the place is worth in the market."

"Are you serious?" asked Bruce.

"Count that, if you don't think so."

Anthony Bruce got up and strolled over to the window, putting his hands in his pockets. The east was growing black with cloud, while from the west a sullen afterglow sifted a dull, silvery light over the river where it began to broaden into the wide reaches of Hampton Roads.

An improbable surmise had begun to float up in Bruce's mind, and he considered it while watching an idly wheeling sea gull.

The old sea dog, his grandfather, had lived at Heather Bay, following the Civil War, with his one son and with the slattern he had married after his first wife died. At that time, every one else in this section of Virginia had been impoverished by the Civil War. But old Anthony Bruce had lived in a state of riotous affluence.

While he lived, he had apparently enjoyed an unlimited income, although from what source it had come had always been unexplained. When he died, his will had hinted at that source, people had thought, when it said: "My personal property, all of which was honorably come by in trade before the war, no matter what slander may assert, is to go with the land, and may be located and inventoried from the directions, writ in my own hand, and sealed in the red-lacquer box."

But the box had never been found.

At first it had been supposed that his slattern second wife had made off with it, for she left the house when her daughter, at the age of nineteen, had married the moonshiner, Ike Fagot. But as it had never come to light,

through all of the forty-nine years since the old man's death, it had been given up as one of those romantic legacies which never materialize.

"What do you want with Heather Bay, Fagot?" asked Anthony Bruce, swinging his well-knit frame around from the window. "Some day, no doubt, all of that land through there will be valuable as a real-estate development, but just now there's nothing there but water moccasins and fish hawks."

"And bootleggers," said Fagot, elbows on knees.

"Well, that's true. The Cape Henry desert is near it, and that's full of stills because it's so wild they can't be found. But I tell you right now, I wouldn't sell Heather Bay for a bootleggers' headquarters. Old Anthony Bruce was a rough-and-ready character, but he was a gentleman. There's never been anything like that in the family, and——"

"Damn you," said Fagot, who had gotten to his feet, "why don't you go ahead and say it? Why don't you say there's never been anything like that in the family except what *we* brought into it? You think it, why don't you say it?"

"I didn't mean to say that," said Bruce. "The fact is, for the moment I had forgotten that you and——"

"Yeah, that's just it! You had forgotten that we were a part of your family. We had the same grandfather, but, by God, you think you are a little tin angel and too good to be related to the likes of us. I been wanting to take a swing at you ever since I was five years old; and right now, if I hadn't agreed with Isaac not to, I'd——"

He paused, his unshaven face oily and red with anger, his huge fists hanging ready.

"You going to sell us Heather Bay?" he asked violently.

"No," said Anthony Bruce, whose gorge had been rising at this repetition of the threatening attitude. "I'm not

going to sell it to you, I don't care what price you offer; and I'll tell you my reason: I don't want people like you and your brother on the property."

It took Fagot a moment to grasp the insult.

"You lousy——" he cried.

He rushed Anthony Bruce to the wall, grappling with him, trying to throw him to the floor.

CHAPTER II.

HEATHER BAY.

BRUCE was trying to break away from the bearlike grip, and fight standing up, with his fists, while Fagot, breathing out fumes of whisky like an infuriated drunken sailor, was trying to get his man down and fight in the less scientific and more effective manner of the primitive man.

They swayed about the end of the narrow room, overturning a chair. Its crash was the only sound, except the shuffling of feet, and their occasional gasps, to break the silence that had fallen. The door to the corridor was open, however. A passer-by stopped, to stare in a sort of fright at the two straining figures. This spectator was joined by another, and by another. There was a group of three women and three men standing there when, by bending his antagonist against the desk, Bruce broke free.

Fagot, twirling sidewise from the wrench, struck the wall and knocked down the coat tree. He regained his balance in the process, however, and lunged at Anthony Bruce, who met him with a left-hand clip to the jaw which diverted him into a plunge against the opposite wall. Here, pulling around to renew the attack, Fagot glimpsed the watchers, and seemed so startled by what he saw that Bruce, too, looked out into the hall.

He, too, was somewhat startled for an instant at recognizing the elder

brother, Isaac Fagot, among the motionless spectators. He was standing in front of them, his big, hairy fists planted on the hips of his corduroy trousers, his gray-flannel shirt open over his hairy chest, his unshaven jaw drawn askew by the mouth corner down-drawn in a snarl. He was only four or five years Denby's senior, but seemed much older, with the streaks of gray in the hair curling under the greasy cap; and there was an added dignity in the very size of his mighty chest and in the granitelike power of his features.

His craggy gray brows were drawn together now over the powerful broken nose. His weather-reddened skin with its gray stubble of beard was flushed, and his flinty gray eyes, narrowed dangerously, were fastened on Denby Fagot in a stare of cold fury.

The effect upon Denby Fagot was remarkable.

Instead of resuming his planned attack, he stood for a moment motionless, meeting his brother's glare. Next he dropped his eyes to the floor, panting through his open mouth like a tired dog. Then, lifting his gaze upon Anthony Bruce, he raised a scuffed finger and, pointing at Bruce, said:

"You didn't have no reason for hitting me, when I just come here to talk to you on business. You didn't have no reason for it. I'm in my rights, and I'm going to have the law on you. They wa'n't no reason for you attacking me."

And with this surprising announcement, pressing down the knitted cap on his brassy hair, and wiping a hand across his nose, he hitched up his trousers and shambled rapidly out of the door, keeping an eye on his elder brother, who fell in behind him, making a double clump of heavy shoes down the corridor and, more faintly, down the stairs.

Bruce for a moment was motionless

in surprise, and stared at the doorway whence the brothers had disappeared. He became conscious, however, that the people in the hall were eying him curiously; so, as he knew none of them, he shut the door—perhaps more emphatically than was necessary—and went to the water basin in the corner to wash his face and hands. He was moved to laugh at the mirror's picture of his angry countenance, and was picking up his hat and the overturned hat tree, when he spied a package that had fallen to the floor.

It was the ten thousand dollars in paper money which the tipsy younger Fagot had placed on his desk at the beginning of their conversation and which must have been knocked to the floor during the scuffle.

Bruce put on his hat, thrust the money in his pocket, and keeping a hand on it, ran to the hall. The brothers, of course, were gone. He locked the office door and hurried down the flight of stone steps to the street corridor and thence to the sidewalk; but he could see nothing of the two Fagots, in either direction, nor, after he had walked to the two corners of the block and looked up and down, did he espy them along the streets of the business district.

He returned to the lobby of his office building and inquired of the elevator man if he had seen the Fagots.

"Them two rough-dressed fellers? They started a-quarrelin' in the lobby here. I told 'em they'd have to take it outside, and I was glad when they did, because that there big one give me a cold eye, and I was scared he might light onto me. No, suh; I didn't note where they went. I was glad to be shut of 'em."

Bruce went to the door again, hesitating whether he should take the money back to his office and wait for some one to come back for it. The overcast sky decided him.

"I'm going to get down to Heather

Bay," he said to himself as he walked around the corner to the garage, "before this breaks. It looks as if it's going to be a peach!"

He put the money in his breast pocket, buttoned his coat over it, and steered his speedy blue roadster out into the narrow street.

"If they want it, they can come to Heather Bay for it," he thought, as he tried to make time in the congested traffic flowing between the low buildings of the old seaport town. "I didn't ask them to leave it in my office, and I'm certainly not going to take any trouble for them."

He finally cut away to the less-frequented streets, and on the concrete highway to Virginia Beach, with one eye on the road and the other on the mirror, stepped her up to sixty miles. The pitch-black clouds had brought an early evening, and the level road, bordered by fields and copses of pine, was brightened at times by flashes of lightning. The rain held off, but Bruce had to slow down when he turned into the long dirt road that led circuitously between walls of pine trees, and occasional farm land, around to his own branch road, where he slowed down even further.

The road was not bad for a dirt road, because he had it dragged regularly, but the feeling of uneasiness which had bothered him all day began now to reassert itself.

He could think of no really serious explanation for it. He had received an anonymous telephone call, asking him if Heather Bay was for sale. He had had this visit from the younger Fagot, which had resulted in a scuffle. There was nothing to this that was worth bothering about. His prize police dog had been poisoned a week earlier, but there was doubtless no connection between this and the other things, and no reason for uneasiness if there had been.

No, it was just a sensation; if it had

been about something else, he would have called it a hunch. He had a hunch that something was coming up out of the life of his roistering old grandfather, the man who had sailed his own yacht around the Horn, fought valiantly in the Civil War for his State, and passed his later years in the enjoyment of a mysterious affluence.

For one thing, of course, the Fagots themselves were in a sense a survival of the old man; at any rate, they illustrated that a man's sins live after him, for the relationship with the slattern after the first wife's death had been dubbed a marriage largely by courtesy. And for another, the big two-story house at Heather Bay, built of juniper logs that would live forever, the spaces between filled with pale-blue cement on the outside, and pale-yellow within; with its furnishings of heavy antique mahogany, silver plate, and curios from all over the world—this, too, lived on to speak of the old man's personality.

There was also to consider, the romantic legend of the red-lacquer box, containing, as he had heard his father say humorously, the key to "how to live without working." And all of these things, like hands from the grave, seemed to Bruce to be reaching out to take hold of him.

It was hard to take the red-lacquer box seriously after all these years, but the offer from the Fagots, and the peculiar remarks of Denby Fagot—

Bruce had just rolled silently over the substantial log bridge which crossed to Heather Bay Island, when, coasting around a sharp curve made blind by a group of cedars, he almost ran into a man at the far edge of the road. He cut to one side just in time, and put on the brakes.

"What do you want on the island?" he demanded, somewhat angry at the danger the man had exposed himself to. And then he noticed a sawed-off shotgun over the man's elbow.

"Boat got adrift," answered the fellow, an evil-looking, briny chap with a red mustache.

"Did you expect to find it up here on the road?" asked Bruce, who still was looking for the man who had poisoned his police dog. "This land is posted."

"Are you Bruce?" asked the fellow, with a curious tenseness to his attitude.

"Never mind who I am," said Bruce. "You are trespassing. Are you going to leave, or not?"

The fellow stood still, his eyes on the ground, for a moment. Then, after a swift, sharp scrutiny of the man in the automobile, he went down the small slope to the shore, where a rowboat had been drawn up in the salt grass, climbed in without a word, shoved off and went along the coast, sculling with an oar over the stern.

Anthony Bruce, wondering what the man had been after—for the lost boat story hadn't been convincing—started again along the road, and within a short while had turned in between the posts of his entrance, on one of which was the legend: HEATHER BAY.

He observed another car, a new one, standing in the road in front of the house, and he put up his own car in the garage with a beating heart. Elinor Chase had not been due to arrive on the defunct house party until the morrow; but she had jokingly told him that she might fly down the day before, and to have a chaperon on hand in case she did.

He wondered if this car was hers.

CHAPTER III.

THE NET TIGHTENS.

WHEN he came out of the garage, Anthony Bruce looked around at the threatening sky. Ordinarily, at this time of summer, there would be light for another hour or two; and even now a half light from the unclouded east

over Cape Henry way made the dull silver of the deep bay, and even the pine trees on the opposite shore, clearly visible.

To the west, and nearly circling the horizon, the black clouds of the threatening storm were split, occasionally, by jagged javelins of lightning. Almost continually thunder rolled across the ruffled water, echoed through the rustling pine and holly trees on the half-cleared island, and went off muttering through the interminably winding reaches of water and marsh and sand-spit and loamy, pine-covered wasteland.

A wind was rising. The wistaria vine upon the big T-shaped log house was whipping against the copper gutter under the shingled roof. Small shreds of bark on the juniper logs were waving gayly against the blue cement between them. And whitecaps were beginning to spurt into prominence against the dull surface of the water, which had changed from silver to a leaden gray.

"It's coming, all right," said Bruce to himself as he went along the flagged walk toward the house, which stood, exposed to the blast, about fifty feet from the water on the east shore of the island. The car on the drive was a sporty new sand-colored roadster. The brick-paved porch, level with the ground, was slippery with pine tags blown there by the wind. He lifted the wrought-iron latch and entered the living room, which was also the dining room of the house.

His colored cook and general handy man, Jim, was arranging places for two on the mahogany table. He rolled a jaundiced eye upon his employer, and although his "Good evenin', Mr. Tony," was, as usual, affectionately courteous, it was evident from his shining black face that he was not pleased with life this evening.

"Who's the guest, Jim? I wasn't expecting anybody." Anthony Bruce's heart was beating hopefully.

Jim's flat nose twitched, his dark lips curved in disapproval; it was hardly visible, this grimace.

"Mr. Hardy Graves," he said dryly. Although he would never have spoken his mind, Jim sometimes exercised the privilege of an old retainer and indulged his own feelings about the household's guests.

"Good," said Anthony Bruce; and at this moment Graves himself, tall, with high compact shoulders, and wearing a gray golf suit, came in from the bedroom at the left.

"Hello, Tony," said Graves, yawning and stretching his long arms. "Where's all the gang?"

"Gang?" inquired Tony Bruce. "Didn't you get the message that the party is off?"

"Not me," said Graves. His eyes and cheek bones were set high up in his colorless and expressionless face; when he yawned it made his long underface seem interminable.

"Why, Mr. Graves," Jim put in, his voice high and small, signifying rebuke, "I tole you dis mornin' over de phone dey wa'n't gwine be no party!"

"No," said Graves, "you must have been talkin' to my secretary, and he must have forgotten to tell me about the message."

"Sho' was his voice!" Jim muttered, going out.

"You don't have very well-trained servants down here in this neck of the woods," said Graves, wrinkling the skin about the pale eyes set high under a slanting brow.

"Mrs. Sanders is away, and the Fosters have influenza," Bruce explained, "so I told Jim to phone you that things were off. I haven't been able to get hold of Elinor."

"Ah, so she'll be down, eh?" Graves laughed.

"Why, of course not! She wouldn't come down till to-morrow midday; wouldn't start till then. And I can

catch her to-night over the phone or by a wire. Did you bring your traps?"

"No," said Graves, "I thought I'd bring 'em later for the party. As it is, I'll stay to dinner and go back after the storm. If you've got some good liquor, I'd like a shot now."

Bruce was nettled, not because of Hardy Graves' assumption of intimate friendship when the intimacy didn't exist, but because it was perfectly plain that Graves had gotten the message about the party's postponement, yet had come over to see for himself. This petty jealousy was irritating enough, but the tacit intimation that Bruce might be trying to put something over on him—lie to him about the postponement—was even more irritating.

"Some ice and ginger ale for Mr. Graves, Jim," he told that worthy, who answered the ring of the silver bell on the table. "This corn is a year old, Graves. Make yourself at home while I wash up."

Jim, dressed in black no blacker than his skin, cooked and served the dinner. Tony Bruce ate listlessly. He was disappointed that he wouldn't see Elinor, and bored by Graves, who talked continuously about his horses, his dogs, his speed boats. The thunder rumbled around the horizon, and while the rain held off the wind had risen. Bruce was roused into attention finally by Graves' change of subject.

"Tony," he said, "I want to buy this house and land. Name your price and I'll pay it."

"What?" exclaimed Tony. "You are too civilized for this place, Graves. It is too far away from everything—five miles to the main highroad; twenty miles to Norfolk; seven miles to Virginia Beach! What do you want with it?"

"It wouldn't be so bad if it were run properly," said Graves. "And I've got the money to do it."

But there was some other reason.

Tony could feel that behind Graves' manner, which was too careless by half. He had been considering talking to Graves about the Fagot offers, just for their mutual amusement, but this changed his mind. It seemed strange to him that all of these offers should have come along at about the same time.

"So you don't think it's run properly now, eh?" Tony laughed.

"Oh, well, it's all right for one person like yourself, who doesn't entertain. You can get along like this, and everybody would have enjoyed the house party as a novelty; sort of roughing it, you know. But you know what I mean."

In spite of himself, Tony felt his face go warm with chagrin. Graves' attitude was snobbish, yet there was an edge of truth to it. Tony had suggested this party while a group had been together at Virginia Beach some weeks earlier, because he had wanted the chance to have Elinor Chase near him for a while.

But in preparing for it, even though he had planned to get a colored woman to assist Jim, he had been conscious that for a bachelor untrained in housekeeping his project of opening the house for the entertainment of eight people for several days was a more ambitious scheme than he had imagined. He had discovered a lack of chinaware; there were not enough forks and knives and spoons; and there was no way of making the old house and the old furnishings seem new. Graves' remark mortified him, and, as there was definite malice behind it, made him angry.

"The place is assessed at four thousand dollars," said Graves. "That would make it worth about ten thousand dollars. I'll give you fifteen thousand dollars for it."

"It isn't for sale," retorted Tony. "I can keep it going now well enough for my own needs, and perhaps some day I'll have enough to keep it in a style

which you would approve of. Besides, I have a certain affection for it. It has my grandfather's old furniture in it, and the family portraits; and I like to live away from the city."

"How much, then? Everything has a price."

"No," replied Tony, "some things can't be bought."

"I've never seen 'em," said Graves. "Name a figure."

"Not for sale," Tony repeated. He remembered that Elinor Chase had been delighted with everything about the place; said that she loved it, in fact. Graves' remarks had made him wonder if she had been polite, and served to make his own loyalty to Heather Bay all the stronger.

"There goes the telephone," said Graves.

"It's the sheriff on de telefoam for you, Mr. Tony," said Jim, who had answered it.

"The sheriff?" questioned Tony, getting up and lifting the phone from the desk near the door. "What does he want with me?"

"Hello, sheriff—— What? Denby Fagot? No, I saw him at my office, about six o'clock. Did I kill him? Hell, no!" Tony laughed. "Since then? Oh, Mr. Hardy Graves is here, and we've been having dinner. What? Yes, probably somebody is tight and trying to kid you. Come over if you want to, though. That's right; looks pretty bad outside."

Tony Bruce hung up the telephone and turned back to the table. He laughed, but his ruddy face, with its straight nose and strong chin, was a trifle paler under his light-brown hair. His clear gray eyes stared at Graves with a puzzled expression.

"That's funny," said Tony. "Sheriff said somebody had phoned him I'd killed Denby Fagot. Must have been some drunk, kidding him. Said he wouldn't come over here with this storm

hanging fire, and would take my word for it. That's curious, now, isn't it? I did have a scuffle with Fagot this afternoon, you know."

"Did you?" questioned Graves. His pale eyes lighted. "That sounds interesting." He looked pleased. "Tell us about it."

Tony started to speak, but was interrupted by a flash and a simultaneous crash of thunder, which shook the house and seemed to shake the whole island. Jim, looking a trifle gray in color, came in and stood by his master.

"Don't like this, eh, Jim?" asked Graves derisively.

Jim's eyeballs showed more than was usual of their jaundiced whites. He didn't like the thunder, that was plain; but a curving of his dark mouth showed that there were other things, too, he didn't care for. Tony Bruce felt again that uncomfortable hunch, that the life of his roistering old grandfather, like a hand from the grave, was reaching out, trying to touch him.

"It's just thunder, Jim," he said comfortably.

The telephone rang again.

"I'll answer it," said Tony, jumping up.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RED HEIRLOOM.

HELLO!" Tony cried into the instrument. "Hello! What's the matter with this telephone? I can't hear a thing, except a buzzing sound. Hello! Oh! Yes, this is Mr. Bruce speaking. All right."

He turned to Graves.

"Richmond calling," he explained. "Elinor, I reckon."

"Oh, does she telephone you from Richmond nowadays?" asked Graves, his colorless face wearing a pained smile. "I didn't know you two were so thick."

"No," replied Tony, "it's just something about the house party. Never did

it before—— Hello! Yes, this is Mr. Bruce. What! Flying down? Can't you stop her? There's bad weather here; besides, the house party is off. What? Can't hear a word I'm saying? What's—— Hello!"

Tony began jiggling the receiver.

"This dern phone has gone dead," said Tony. "It was just as if the wire had been cut. Can't even get central. Hello—— No. No use."

He hung up, swung his well-knit frame into a chair, crossed his leather boots, put his hands in the pockets of his blue-serge suit, and sat there with a frown bringing his light brows together over his straight nose.

"What's the trouble?" asked Graves.

"She has already started," Tony replied. "There's a fool up in Richmond who has an amphibian plane and he's flying her down in it, damn him! I didn't want her to come that way, but you know how she is—try anything once."

"Funny about that phone going dead," said Graves.

"Yes," agreed Tony, "and you know, there have been other things around this place recently I don't care about at all. My dog was poisoned—you've heard that. Then to-day Denby Fagot came into my office and tried to buy Heather Bay. He was drunk and quarrelsome, and we had a scuffle. It didn't amount to anything, and he went off with his brother, but now the sheriff calls me up and asks me if I have killed the man."

"That may be a joke on somebody's part, but it doesn't appeal to my sense of humor. And now this confounded telephone wire has been cut, I believe. I shouldn't be surprised if it was done by that fellow I chased off the property just now."

"What fellow was that?" asked Graves, moistening his lips and swallowing.

"A tough-looking customer with a

red mustache. He had a sawed-off shotgun down by the bridge."

"A sawed-off shotgun!" exclaimed Graves.

"And now, damn it," added Tony, plunging his fingers through his thick light-brown hair, "that fool up in Richmond has let Elinor start off with him in that plane. That's the only thing that bothers me. The fellow is supposed to be a good flyer, but he isn't a professional, and they will be coming into bad weather."

"They'll probably land over at the beach or at the cape or somewhere on the way. This is only a local storm we're having. When did they start?"

"That's what I couldn't find out. But I don't believe Elinor will be satisfied unless she comes all the way, storm or no storm. You know how she is. She's got no business in a plane; she's too foolhardy."

"The man will probably keep out of this rain."

"I don't know. He thinks that plane of his can do everything except climb a tree, and likes to prove it. I suppose they'd be as safe landing on this sheltered bay, if they got this far, as landing anywhere else, unless they were outside of the storm area."

Hardy Graves had been frowning seriously at the floor and moistening his lips. Now he raised his long frame to a standing position and shook himself.

"You know, Tony," he said, "there's something in the air around this place to-night. I don't like it, and I don't believe you do. I'll tell you what. Come on with me over to the club at Virginia Beach and spend the night. Jim can look after the place."

"I ain't gwine stay in dis here house by myse'f," said Jim, rolling his eyes so expressively that Tony laughed.

"Then you can walk to town," said Graves harshly. "Come on, Tony."

"No," said Tony, "I don't see any good reason why I shouldn't sleep in my

own house. I certainly wouldn't allow myself to be scared out of it. But, aside from that, Elinor may fly in here with that pilot sap."

"Oh, that's nonsense!" snapped Graves. His long frame in the golf suit crossed to the window where he peered out toward the bay. "Can't see much now, but it isn't raining here yet. Whew!"

He jumped back from the window as a blinding flash silhouetted the sash and the wistaria leaves, and a crash of thunder shook the earth till the dishes rattled.

"I'm going to get out of this damn place," said Graves, turning up his collar. "You coming, Tony?"

"No," said Tony Bruce. "But here's a coat, Graves. I may see you later. If Elinor should drop in, I'll have to bring her over to the club, you know. She can't stay here."

"If I thought she was coming," said Graves, "I'd wait. You know I've got plenty of nerve, Tony. But there's something going on around here that I don't like; and it's none of my business. Don't be a fool; come on to the club with me."

"No, thanks," said Tony, pushing on the outside light.

"Mr. G-Graves," asked Jim, and his teeth chattered audibly, "w-will you t-take me over to de road, suh?"

"To hell with you and the road," said Graves as he pulled a gray-tweed cap down over his eyes and pushed the outer door open against the wind, which blew in and lifted the rug on the floor and made papers flutter. Tony followed him, to see him to the car. The door slammed behind them noisily.

They both paused for a minute before leaving the shelter of the porch. A fine mist was blowing past the porch light, forerunner of the imminent rain. The wind was marching between the trunks of the pine trees, that covered the island more and more thickly as the

distance from the clearing around the house increased.

In the darkness outside of the light's radius the island seemed filled with bustle and movement. Sounds rose suddenly, as of the rush of large bodies, and as suddenly ended. Invisible objects scurried with a rustling and secretive haste, turned unreasonably in their course and abruptly subsided. A sprig of holly blew against Hardy Graves' tweed sleeve and clung there, trembling.

"Well," said Graves, clearing his throat, "I guess I'd better get a hump on. No use of your coming out to the car."

He pulled at his cap and stepped forth upon the flagged walk, which shone damply by the porch. Suddenly he stopped, and Tony, following behind, bumped into him. Graves stepped backward and clutched Tony's arm.

"What's that, Bruce?" he asked in a hushed tone.

His long, white hand pointed to where the edge of the light's radius met the beginning of darkness.

Something was lying across the path.

"It's a man," said Graves, swallowing with an audible click. "It's a man in a sweater and trousers. Good God! What's happened now?"

Tony Bruce led the way to the object lying motionless on the flagged walk. It was a man, as Graves had said. As they neared him, Bruce saw that he was lying on his face, his arms stretched out in front of him. He wore a maroon sweater, and a dark-blue knitted cap sat on the back of his oily, brass-colored hair.

Bruce knelt and turned the limp figure over. The fine rain beat upon a brutal face, now white and still. Before this, Bruce had seen that it was Denby Fagot; now he knelt there and stared. There was no use of feeling for a heartbeat under the old sweater. The hole in the center of the narrow forehead put an end to that hope.

"He's dead!" Graves whispered.

"Yes," said Tony Bruce.

He saw a dark object which had been lying under the man. Letting the inert figure go, he picked up the object and, rising, moved a little farther into the light.

It was a red-lacquer box. On the cover, inlaid in gilt, were the initials, "A. B."

"Come on," said Graves earnestly, "let's get back in the house!"

CHAPTER V.

THE DEAD MAN.

TONY BRUCE followed as Graves led the way back to the living room and locked the front door.

"I'll push out that porch light, too," said Graves. "Good Lord, what do you suppose is up?" He began walking excitedly up and down the room, while Jim's jaundiced eyes rolled anxiously from one white man to the other as he tried to fathom what had happened while they were out. "Do you know who that man is, Tony?"

"Yes," said Bruce, who was staring at the red-lacquer box which he held in his hands. It was wet and had pine tags sticking to it. "That's Denby Fagot."

"Not the man the sheriff phoned about!"

"Yes."

"Who dat? Whar he? He outside, Mr. Tony?" asked Jim, his black face positively gray.

"Yes, he's outside!" shouted Graves. "He's outside on the flagged walk, dead—with a bullet hole in his forehead! Does that satisfy you?" Graves seemed glad of some one more nervous than himself, on whom he could vent his own discomfort.

The negro, seated on the settee because of the weakness of his knees, began softly to pat his palms together, keeping time with a heel on the floor,

and began softly to hum to himself, a crooning tune, full of minor notes:

"I got a mothuh in de heavenly lan',
Waitin' for me, waitin' for me,
I got a mothuh in de heavenly lan',
Waitin' for me, waitin' for me,
I got a mothuh in de heavenly lan',
Take me to mah Fathuh, lead me by de
han'——"

"Will you shut up that damn noise!" cried Graves, and wrested a Winchester rifle from the pegs over the side door. "You shut that, or, damn your soul, I'll shoot you."

"Whoa, Graves," said Tony Bruce. "Steady, now. You'd better put that gun back, before you fire it accidentally. You've got nothing to worry about," he added as Graves reached up and replaced the gun. "But somebody evidently is trying to lay this killing at my door."

"But, why?" cried Graves. "Why?"

"That's what I don't exactly understand," replied Bruce slowly. "It may have something to do with this box."

"What in the world are you talking about?" cried Graves.

"It's a long story," said Tony, his gray eyes fixed on the box. "You know, it was supposed that my grandfather had some secret source of income. His will mentions that it could be found by looking in a red-lacquer box which he owned."

"Well, hurry up!"

"We couldn't find the box. It was missing when he died. Now here is a red-lacquer box with his initials on it."

"But what have the Fagots to do with it?"

"The Fagots are descended from him, too, Graves. And you remember Fagot came to my office this morning to try and buy this place. See here? He left this ten thousand dollars on my desk."

"Left it on your desk?" repeated Graves incredulously.

"Yes. Forgot it."

"And he had the box, and you wanted it. Is that it?"

Bruce looked up at something in Graves' tone of voice.

"Why, Graves!" he exclaimed. "You believe I killed the man!"

Graves' pale eyes, high up in his narrow face, were fixed on Bruce's ruddy countenance; then they ran over him, as if they were seeing him aright for the first time.

"I haven't said I think so," said Graves, and something in his manner made Bruce think that Graves now was actually afraid for his own skin; actually afraid that, because the two were rivals in love, *his* life was in danger.

"But, think a minute!" Tony Bruce commanded. "You drove up to the house yourself an hour or so ago. That body wasn't across the walk then, was it?"

"No," said Graves, and moistened his lips. "But that's just it."

"What are you talking about?"

"You came in after I did," said Graves.

Bruce's gray eyes stared steadily at him for a minute.

"Well," said Bruce, shrugging, "you can think what you damn please. At any rate, if I killed him for this box I didn't get much for my pains. The box is empty. The lock, as you see, was forced, and there's nothing inside of it."

"But you didn't know that, of course," said Graves.

"Listen here," said Tony Bruce, and he walked over to stand in front of the tall, compact lawyer, "you make one more insinuation like that, and I'll knock your damned ugly face in. You can't call me a murderer."

Hardy Graves whitened. He wasn't afraid, however, or if he was, he felt that he had the stronger position and the moral advantage. His eyes didn't waver.

"I'm not accusing you," he said. "I'm

merely trying to bring out the facts. You told me you'd had a scuffle——"

He started.

"That sounds like an explosion," he remarked.

"The Fagots have dynamited fish around here at times. It's against the law, and I've gotten after them."

"A man isn't going to be dynamiting for fish on a night like this," said Graves. "I'm going to the beach, Bruce. Once more, do you want to come with me?" His tone was conciliatory.

"Take Jim with you," said Tony Bruce. "I've already told you I'm going to wait here and look out for Elinor, in case she should fly down. And, another thing, Graves. I take it you are going to notify the sheriff about this—this man outside. I want you to, anyway; but don't be in a hurry about it. I mean, wait an hour or so, because I don't want to be pulled out of here and leave the place with Elinor maybe flying here later to-night."

"There is no reason why the sheriff should arrest you," said Graves.

"Except that telephone call he got. So far as evidence goes, Fagot was by your car, you know, Graves."

"But I had no motive!"

"I don't know. You tried to buy Heather Bay from me to-night, as Jim can testify. And here is the red box, broken open."

"But the body wasn't there when you came in," insisted Graves.

"I didn't see it," Bruce agreed, "but that might have been because I came across the lawn directly to the porch from the garage. I'm not saying you did this, I'm just showing you that circumstantial evidence is only circumstantial."

Graves turned up the coat collar of his gray golf suit once more. Jim seemed to hate to go out of the door, but evidently he hated still more staying behind in the house, for he went

out, close beside Graves. Graves, for his part, probably found it not disagreeable to have another human being in the car with him as he started it and rolled slowly away along the winding sandy road toward the bridge.

Tony shut the front door behind them, switched off the porch light after they had gone, took down the Winchester from over the door and saw to it that it was loaded. He then got his automatic out of the gun case on the sideboard and put it in his hip pocket. The two shotguns over the huge field-stone fireplace he left alone, because he knew that they were oiled and clean and loaded.

After having taken these precautions, he went to the mahogany desk in the corner and took out a copy of his grandfather's will. There it was, near the end of the second page: "My personal property, all of which was honorably come by in trade before the war, no matter what slander may assert, is to go with the land, and may be located and inventoried from the directions, writ in my own hand, and sealed in the red-lacquer box."

He examined the box again. There were signs of glue and of pasted paper over where the lock had been pried open, as if this box had been sealed. And the initials, "A. B.," certainly seemed to indicate that it might have been the very box of the will.

The whole business was rather unaccountable. Tony Bruce, although somewhat shaken by the sight of the body of Denby Fagot—a man with whom a few hours before he had been locked in a wrestling embrace—still did not feel especially worried about the attempt to connect himself with the man's death. He had a conviction of innocence, and this will sustain a man more than a battery of famous lawyers. His chief uncomfortable impression was that this was a part of the whole web of circumstance which he had inherited

from the retired ship owner, and which seemed to be trying to tangle him in its skein.

And he was anxious lest Elinor might come to the island this night.

His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of running footsteps to the landward side of the house. He threw a shell into the Winchester and, holding it ready, faced the door as he moved sidewise toward one of the windows set shoulder-high in the cemented logs.

Before he reached the window, the footsteps rang on the brick of the porch, the iron latch was rattled and the door flung open, revealing a wet and disheveled Graves, who slammed the door behind him, locked it, and, as if this were not enough, set his shoulder against it.

"What's the matter?" demanded Bruce.

Graves, pale in spite of his exertions, panted and leaned his long frame against the door.

"The bridge—was out," he gasped between breaths. "It was blown out—dynamited. I—turned around in that damn soft sand—tried to—and got stalled. I—had to come back—on foot."

"Well, what was after you?"

"I—I don't know," Graves answered. "There was something. Some damn thing was behind me—all the way. When I walked, it walked. When I ran, it ran. I—I couldn't shake it off."

"But where is Jim?" Bruce asked sharply.

"He—he wouldn't come back to the house, he said. He tried to swim the place where the bridge went out. The tide is fast there, you know."

"Tried to? What do you mean, tried to?"

"I couldn't see him any more after I turned around and my lights weren't on him," said Graves, leaving the door and pouring out a half tumbler of whisky. His hand shook; the decanter chattered against the glass.

"You don't know whether he got over?"

"I heard a cry," answered Graves. He drank off the whisky neat, and wiped his mouth, shuddering. "Hell, Bruce!" he exclaimed. "We can't stay in this damn place! No telephone, and God knows what around us on this island!"

"Looks like you'll have to," said Bruce with grim humor.

"No," said Graves, shaking his narrow head. "I'll be damned if I stay here."

CHAPTER VI.

A VISITOR.

THE bridge was out—blown out?"

Tony repeated, sitting down in a chair with the rifle across his knees, his ruddy face serious and pondering. "Now, that means only one thing, Graves. For some reason, somebody is trying to shut us off on this island."

Graves picked up the telephone receiver, listened a moment, then shook his head.

"Dead!" he commented. "Hell!" He sat down.

"But what could be the motive?" asked Bruce. "Apparently they're trying to keep us on the island. But why?"

"Us?" cried Graves, his pale, narrow face distorted with anger and anxiety. "You, you mean! I've never seen this man, Fagot, before—except just once, and then for only a minute. I was going in Jones' real-estate office the other day— No, by George! it was to-day; it seems ages ago. I went in there this morning, to get him to buy Heather Bay for me. This man was in there. The private-office door wasn't closed, and I heard him saying something about the island himself. He was asking what Jones thought it was worth. I got up and went out. And that's the only time I ever saw him, before to-night."

Graves' high, square shoulders shook involuntarily.

"That's one thing I can't understand," said Bruce, running his fingers through his light-brown hair while his gray eyes studied the face of the wealthy lawyer—"what you want with Heather Bay."

"What was that?" whispered Graves, getting up so abruptly that he overturned his chair with a clatter.

"I heard nothing," replied Tony.

"Yes," whispered Graves. "Listen! I've been listening, and I tell you I heard footsteps. Yes, on the porch. I heard a boot scuff on the bricks. There!—did you hear?"

"Yes," replied Bruce in a whisper.

He got quietly to his feet, holding his rifle ready. The windows facing the porch were screened, and Jim had closed the outside blinds when the storm began. There was a wide mattress window seat before them, in the room. He could not see anything from where he stood, so he moved forward cautiously. Graves put a detaining hand on his arm, and Bruce felt the hand tremble.

"What?" asked Bruce in a whisper.

Graves swallowed, and did not answer. Bruce shook off his hand.

At that moment there came three loud knocks on the door.

Then there was silence. Bruce and Graves held their breath, listening. The person on the porch did not move. Thunder could be heard rumbling around the horizon. The heavy rain had not arrived; as sometimes happened, the storm was circling around the bay, following the inlet to the south. Occasional glimmers of lightning showed through the blind. Ordinarily, the dull beating of the surf on the sandy beach of the ocean, five or six miles away as the crow flies, could be heard, but this evening the sound of the wind in the trees and in the underbrush shut out the ocean except during lulls in the

storm's restless march. Only the wind, now, and the rumbling thunder, could be heard.

The men in the room and the person on the porch seemed to be carrying on a competition of silence. The rocking-chair that Bruce had risen from kept rocking until Graves put out a long, pale hand and stopped it.

Three knocks, this time louder and more insistent, pounded on the upper panel of the front door.

Tony Bruce bent his ruddy face down close to Graves' narrow pale one.

"You stay behind the door," he whispered. "Open it quickly and I'll keep the doorway covered."

"Don't be a fool!" said Graves, showing his long teeth angrily. "You're not going to open that door, are you?"

"Certainly," said Bruce. "You going to do as I say, or shall I open it without any precautions?"

Graves went to the door and put his hand on the bolt.

"Who's there?" he cried suddenly.

There was no answer.

"Who's there?" he repeated, then he looked over his shoulder. "They've gone," he said.

Then a voice came from the porch. A man's voice.

"I want to talk to you, on business," said the voice in nasal tones.

Bruce motioned to Graves to open the door, and the lawyer, after a moment of hesitation, drew the bolt softly and opened the door, snapping on the porch light at the same time. He stood behind the door, a heavy affair of wormy chestnut, while Tony Bruce stood in the middle of the living room, holding the Winchester ready for shooting from the hip at the doorway.

No one was visible at first; then came a shuffle of boots on the brick; and an aquiline nose, red-tipped and shining with mist, and a drooping black mustache, moved into the light. The man's eyes were shaded by a wet black-felt

hat. He wore a sailor's heavy pea-jacket to protect him from the rain, and his high cheek bones sweated from its heat. His trousers were wet and his rubber boots gleamed. His brown fists hung beside him.

He stood without speaking. The dim glint of his shaded eyes seemed to be inventorying the room, but came back to regard the Winchester and the stalwart young man holding it.

"You Mr. Bruce?" he asked in a nasal, drawling tone.

"I am," said Bruce, "and this is my property. What do you want on it? I warn you right now not to move in any direction till I give you leave."

"I jest want to make you a proposition; kind of a business proposition, I reckon you'd call it," said the man in a sort of defiantly humorous, or waggish, tone. "Don't see no call for you throwin' a gun on me."

"What is your proposition?" said Tony Bruce. "How did you get here?"

"Why," answered the fellow deliberately, "I come by boat. I never war much of a swimmer." He showed a gold tooth; but he was defiant rather than amused.

"Say what you've got to say," returned Bruce sharply. "A man has been killed on this island to-night. Some one has blown up my bridge. And somebody has got to settle for all this. What is your business? Oh, I think I've seen you with Fagot, haven't I?"

"My business," drawled the fellow, "ain't neither here nor there, and you ain't seen me with Fagot no more than with nobody else, I reckon." He turned his head and spat a brown stream into the night.

The fellow seemed somehow familiar to Bruce, but on the marshes, duck hunting, or in the various reaches of the inland water, he often passed dubious-looking men in their boats—bootleggers or illicit distillers; or poachers,

shooting game out of season; or sometimes they were just fishermen, or men doing some oyster dredging, or men after soft-shell crabs and wading up to their hips in the oozy mud to find them.

"My proposition is jes' this," resumed the fellow, turning his aquiline, red-tipped nose back into the light. "You picked up something out on the walk a while ago—a red box, it was. Now, we ain't lookin' for no more trouble than we got already. Hand me over that there box, and by to-morrow mornin', like as not, you'll find us cleared out and gone."

"What do you want with the box?" asked Bruce. "There's nothing in it."

"Well," drawled the fellow, wiping the mist from his mustaches, "you can say it's jes' a sort of sentimental idea. Or you can say, they might be reasons why we don't want it layin' around. Any reason you pick is all right with me."

"Put your hands up!" demanded Tony Bruce. "I'm going to hold you for the sheriff."

The man did not move; merely stood there with the hat shading his eyes and his lower jaw moving as he chewed.

"Put 'em up!" said Bruce, and moved toward him.

As Bruce moved forward, the man moved back. He didn't lift his hands or change his expression; merely moved backward at the same pace as the younger man, so the same space remained between them. The next moment the man would be against the porch railing, so Bruce followed, intending to get behind him and force him into the house.

As Bruce stepped out into the light of the porch lamp, however, two shots, in rapid succession, rang out from the darkness at one side of the house. He heard the bullets sink into the juniper log by his head.

Involuntarily, he jumped back into

the doorway. At the same time, Graves was slamming the door shut. The swinging door struck Bruce and knocked him off balance upon the settle under the row of windows. Graves forced the door shut and bolted it while Bruce was struggling up.

"Keep that light on!" Bruce instructed in a low tone, and ran across the room to the side door.

"Don't open that door, you fool!" cried Graves.

But Bruce had opened the door, and had slipped out into the windy night, closing the door quietly behind him. This side of the house was in shadow; he held his gun ready and crept rapidly toward the front of the house where the man had been standing. Reaching the corner, he peered around.

Graves had left the light on. It illuminated the porch, level with the ground, its red-brick floor shiny with mist and bestrewn with pine needles. The boot-prints of the visitor were visible; they had left in the landward direction, from which the shots had come. The light threw a circle of radiance onto the lawn immediately around the porch and along the flagged walk toward the driveway. Nothing moved within that circle, except the wistaria vines blowing against the log upright, the petunias visible through the wooden railing, and a small holly tree which stood shivering in the warm, misty wind. Beyond the circle of light, the trunks of trees showed dimly in the edge of the surrounding darkness.

In that darkness, somewhere, stood the man who had deliberately tried to kill him a minute before; perhaps the same man who had killed Denby Fagot. Tony felt a surge of cold anger, a kind of hatred, rise in him for this man he could not see. He wanted to find him.

Toward the right, the light did not reach to the water. Tony, keeping the house between himself and the darkness from which the shots had come,

walked down near the water. Where he felt that he would be in sufficient darkness to be invisible, he proceeded toward the left, intending to circle around the radiance of the porch light and see if he could not find the man who was hiding in the trees.

No sooner had he moved out of the protection of the house, however, than a shot rang out of the darkness; he felt the instantaneous tug of the bullet through his coat.

He threw up his own gun and fired three times toward the flash. A second shot answered, and whined by his head. He dropped to the ground and fired twice more into the place where the flash had shown. Two answering shots cut the twigs of a box bush beside him. He rolled over, to get behind a leaning cedar which grew beside the walk leading to the canoe beach. Here, climbing to his knees, he was meditating upon a new angle of attack when he heard a sound which made him freeze to stillness.

From somewhere high overhead, in the direction of Virginia Beach, but coming nearer, he heard the drone of an airplane motor. He was as certain as if he had seen her, that behind the instrument board sat Elinor Chase, her brown eyes bright, her cheeks flushed, her curling chestnut hair peeping from beneath the leather helmet. No ordinary plane would be over the bay on a night like this; and this was the very reason Elinor would be tickled that she was doing it. Her reckless bravery was one of the things he especially liked her for. But to-night he had no admiration for it.

"I hope it is some friend of these scoundrels," he thought, "and not Elinor."

As if replying to his thoughts, three more shots rang out from the darkness. Two of them whined past; the third sank into the cedar tree.

The plane swooped nearer.

CHAPTER VII.

A DESERTION.

THE airplane roared directly over the tree where Bruce was sheltered, but continued on toward the south. He tried to see it, but the branches overhead prevented. It was doubtful if he could have seen it at all, he realized, because the sky overhead was black. The roaring had been so loud because the plane had come down under the "ceiling," and this convinced him that the pilot was looking for a landing place. Even as he strained his eyes into the misty darkness he heard the roaring motor circling round to the left as if it were coming back.

Tony Bruce dropped to his hands and knees. Dragging the Winchester, he made his way below the slope of the bank, which dropped off gradually to meet the water, and crouching, he ran back along the way he had come until the house intervened between himself and the spot from which the shots had been coming.

Then he ran up the slope to the house and knocked softly on the door he had come out of.

"Graves, open up. It's Bruce!"

The door was opened, after a fumbling hand had drawn the bolt, and Bruce went inside, locking the door.

"Graves," he said, "did you hear the plane? It must be Elinor and that pilot. I didn't think he'd be fool enough to let her do it in this weather."

Graves had turned up his coat collar; his cap was pulled down over his colorless face, and he was just now buttoning up his gloves.

"Get out of the way," said Graves.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to get out of this mess. You can let Elinor in on it if you want to—if this is Elinor in the plane. Needless to say, I have my doubts."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Bruce angrily. "Do you mean

you are going away and let Elinor land here—going to desert the ship just when you are needed? Did you hear the shots that were fired at me just then?"

Bruce's gray eyes flashed steady fire, but Graves showed his long teeth in an angry laugh.

"How do I know this is Elinor? How do I know what your game is? What do you live in this God-forsaken place for, anyhow? You've got a feud on down here, Bruce. You've let me in on this much of it, and want me to stay on; but I see no reason why I should pull your dirty chestnuts out of the fire. Get out of the way."

"You're crazy, Graves," said Bruce, talking calmly, though his ruddy face was flushed under its sprinkling of mist. "You are not going to play the coward now, are you?"

"Coward, hell!" snapped Graves. "This is your funeral, not mine. You killed this man Fagot; and when they sent——"

"You can't say that to me," said Bruce, laying the Winchester against the wall.

"And when they sent that man here," Graves continued, "you wouldn't let him have that box you people are fighting over. You'd rather fight them off and have me help you do it. And if that's Elinor in the plane, then, by God, you let her come here when you knew you were going to be pulling off this kind of stuff!"

"Listen, you fool!" said Bruce, trying to control his anger and be reasonable with the man. "You have heard everything I have heard. You know everything I know. You heard the telephone conversation between me and the sheriff; you heard me talk to Richmond——"

"Wait," said Graves, "I didn't hear anything except this man come to the door and ask you for this red box you and your bootlegger friends are fight-

ing over. If you had any consideration for me, you'd have let them have it. As to the telephone conversations, I heard you tell me what was said, but I wasn't on the wire. All I know is, that you came in after I did, and a little while later you take me outside and let me be the one to find the dead body of Denby Fagot. Get out of my way!"

"Damn you!" said Bruce. "You white-livered rascal, you can't intimate that I killed Fagot. You take that back!"

"Get out of my way!" said Graves.

He caught Bruce's arm, pulled him away from the door, and drew the bolt. Bruce caught him before he had gotten through the open door, and dragged him back.

"You are going to stay here and help protect Elinor Chase, the girl you say you are in love with," said Bruce, "or I'm going to give you a licking."

"Get out of my way!" cried Hardy Graves. His voice was shrill, his pale eyes rolled, as if he were frantic at the thought of being compelled to stay in this house. "Your negro knows your game," he cried. "Jim wouldn't stay here with you—you murderer!"

He charged at Tony. His long face was white, his fists were flailing madly, his lips were flecked from his cries. Bruce stepped back a pace, then swung a right that caught the lawyer on his long teeth and sent him reeling backward to his haunches. He lay there, half supported by his hands; not stunned, but calmer. Slowly, he got up to his feet, brushed his long white hands together, brushed off his trousers as he moved nearer the table in the center of the room.

Suddenly, before Bruce had realized what his plan was, Graves snatched up the red-lacquer box from the table, and, holding it in his hands, dashed out of the open door.

He was free before Bruce could stop him, free and outside. Following him

half-heartedly, Bruce saw the long, thin legs in golf stockings disappearing around the rear of the house, to the right.

Bruce stopped in his tracks, and laughed at the sight of the flying arms and legs. Graves was no help in his present state of mind. And the box was empty. It was rather ridiculous to see him go galloping off into the very dangers he was afraid of, carrying the empty red-lacquer box as if it were some talisman for scaring away the devil.

The next moment, however, Tony Bruce became serious. The airplane had returned again. This time it was hardly a hundred feet above the trees. He could see its large form whirl by dimly and disappear, only to rise and return. The pilot, apparently, was examining the lay of the land. Perhaps he had seen the lights of the house and had, with this help, identified the location of the bay beside it. At any rate, the next time the plane came back, a light flared out from its side and dropped down, making a bright blaze through the misty darkness. It struck by the water's edge and burned there brilliantly, so that the cedar behind which Bruce had been concealed was silhouetted in a vivid pattern against the radiance on the water.

He had heard nothing more from the men with whom he had been exchanging shots. Either they were unprepared for this new event, and were watching it, alarmed, or they were prepared for it and were awaiting its successful consummation. Tony offered up a little prayer that Elinor was not in the plane.

He switched off the porch light, and began reloading the Winchester. After he had done this, he switched off all the lights in the house. Then, with the side door ajar, he stood peering through it at the lighted space on the roughened water of the bay.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUT OF THE SKY.

TONY was worried. Sitting in the dark shadow of the open doorway, watching the light of the flare gradually lessen, hearing the roar of the airplane's engine, he began to believe more and more that this was Elinor in the plane. An experienced pilot would have landed by now, provided this was the landing place; and if it wasn't, why was the plane circling overhead?

The shadows crept nearer to the shore as the flare burned lower. Across the bay, in a sheltered nook, the score of tame mallard ducks, which he had raised to use as decoys in the fall, were clacking and quacking over this invasion of their slumbers. A wedge of them had started across the bay, thinking perhaps it was feeding time, but the swoop of the plane the last time had turned their leader back.

The wind had greatly subsided from its earlier force. The clouds were low and black over the island and all around the horizon, except that toward the ocean they were lighter. Lightning occasionally brightened the bay, bringing out the silhouette of the old cedar which hung almost horizontal from the bank, just ahead of the beach where the canoe was drawn up.

"Here it comes back!" thought Tony, running his fingers worriedly through his light-brown hair.

The plane, after passing with a gleam of silver wings and pontoons over the light, had been lost quickly in the darkness at the far turn of the bay. Now, having turned around over the waste, it was coming back along its last course and seemed to be heading for the light.

"It's going to land!" Tony cried, and stood up.

On the plane came, becoming more and more visible as it neared the light. It was making in too near the shore, then it turned out a bit and began to

drop. There was a sudden crashing sound as it neared the surface of the water. It veered shoreward slightly and landed sidewise on its farther wing, its pontoons at the oblique angle sending the water spuming before them as they plowed ahead. The wave from the impact rose against the already expiring flare and extinguished it, leaving the whole scene abruptly eclipsed, as by the falling of a black-velvet curtain.

For an instant, Bruce stood still in surprise at this unexpected darkness, and blinked his eyes at the red spots floating before them. Then, leaning the Winchester against the inside of the doorway, and feeling his hip to be sure the revolver was there, he ran down the incline toward the shore, making no more sound than he had to on the grassy, needle-strewn ground. His heart was in his mouth. The crash had not sounded bad, but if Elinor was in that plane, and had been hurt——

He did not allow himself to finish this terrible thought. At the shore's edge he could see the plane, a dark, shapeless shadow, about ten feet out in the bay. The foam it had kicked up floated sharply white around it. In it, no one spoke, no one called aloud.

He did not want to shout aloud himself, for fear of giving away his position to the men in the woods, in the event they were watching for a shot at him. He felt dubious about swimming out to the plane, too, lest it be occupied by one of the men who had been surrounding his place and blowing up his bridge. But the thought that Elinor might possibly be in there kept him from hesitating even a second. On reaching the shore he began walking straight ahead into the cool salt water.

He could see more as his eyes became accustomed to the dark. The little waves breaking against the ship's cracked wing were so sharply white because of the phosphorescence, he saw now. The water was up to his hips

when he felt the brush of a branch and realized that the plane had swept into the horizontal cedar with its wing. It was up to his hips when he first touched the cracked wing's fabric. It had got up to his waist when he came near enough to see a dim outline, as of a man's head and shoulders, above the cockpit forward.

He had to feel his way forward gradually. The gray sand bottom sloped down gently at first, but he knew that of a sudden it dropped off to a fifteen-foot depth. His laced leather boots were heavy and hard to feel with. He pushed ahead, leaning sidewise to compensate for the tug of the tide, and the water was up to his armpits almost when suddenly from the cockpit a bright light shone in his eyes.

He was completely blinded by it. He could see nothing except this brilliant circle of light. His revolver was in his hip pocket, under the water, while his two arms were held up above the surface to keep them dry. He stood there, in this position, staring and blinking for a moment. Then from the plane came a ripple of laughter.

"Elinor!" he said, and added softly: "Put out that light, quick! Are you hurt?"

She put out the light. Her rippling laugh was repeated.

"Honestly, Tony," she cried, "you should have seen your face!"

"S-s-h!" he insisted. "Thank God, you're not hurt! Wait, I can pull this boat nearer shore, then I'll carry you in. Don't make any sound, and be getting ready to get out."

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed in an amused undertone. "This sounds like a scene from 'The Barkeeper's Daughter,' or something. Where's all the gang?"

"Will you keep quiet?" he demanded. He was slightly angry because of the fear he had felt for her safety. "Now, come on; climb out into my arms."

"Wouldn't that be rather unmaidenly?" she asked, still laughing as she obeyed him. "Tony, it's the first time I ever heard you be so forward. Honestly, now," she continued as he turned and, walking precariously on the soft bottom, started shoreward, "what's the meaning of all this melodrama?"

"If you say another word," said Tony, "I'll drop you."

"All right, I'll stop. This flying suit is everything I've got with me, except what's in this little bag." She twisted and put her lips to his ear. "My, you are strong," she said.

"*S-sh!*" said Tony.

He actually felt happy. Her flying helmet rested against his hair. Her arm was around his neck. Her soft figure, so feminine despite the leather puttees and the masculine flying suit, hung heavy in his arms. There was a fragrance about her which, even mixed with the odor of gasoline, was more heady than wine, so far as he was concerned.

He had often imagined himself holding her in his arms, but this was the nearest to it he had ever come in reality. The way he felt about her, coupled with the fact that he had always felt she favored Hardy Graves, had kept him rather self-conscious and somewhat diffident when she was around. And this was further aggravated by the fact that she was quick-witted and seemed to like to tease him.

They had shared one thing—a love for Heather Bay. Although she had been there seldom, compared to himself, she had loved it from the first, and made Graves run her over in his speed boat whenever she came to this part of the country. There was something about the wildness of the water-surrounded island, the substantial character of the lonely house, about the tamed wild ducks, the two tame pheasants, the fact that she could see blue and white herons from the front porch,

catch fish off the canoe landing, catch a basket full of crabs by merely walking with a net along the shore—such things as these seemed to appeal to something simple and nature-loving in her. And as Tony Bruce had the same feeling about Heather Bay, only to a more intense degree, this had been a genuine bond between them.

But he had planned this time to welcome her to Heather Bay under other circumstances than this.

He walked gradually up from the water, without slipping, put her safely on the land, took her hand and led her up the slope to the open door, which they entered, and he locked behind them. He turned on a single light in a wall socket and put a hat over it, so that it threw a faint radiance down upon the oaken floor, where the water from his dripping body was fast spreading into a small pool.

"Why, Tony!" she exclaimed, "your hand is bleeding. And there's blood on your chest, too!" She put her finger where the first bullet had pulled at his coat; in the excitement he hadn't felt the scratch it had made. "What on earth have you been doing?"

She turned slowly around, observing the two overturned chairs, the Winchester by the door, the dinner dishes, which had not been removed, and the places that had been set for two.

"Who has been here?" Her vivid face was serious now. Her dark eyes, with long black lashes, were opened wide upon him. "What on earth has happened?" She was small, compared to his five feet eleven inches, but she was a gallant figure as she stood there in the riding breeches and puttees, the flying coat—which was much too big for her—sagging about her squared shoulders.

"It's hard to explain," said Bruce, his gray eyes looking her over admiringly. "But I've got to get you away from here right away."

"Why?" she demanded. "And after all the trouble I've been to to come, Tony? Jack Jones landed at Virginia Beach and swore he wouldn't bring me a foot farther on account of the storm. We argued for half an hour or more. Then he went off, trying to find an automobile to take us to the hotel, I simply started the engine and sailed away on my own hook. I bet he's mad enough to chew nails. He's such a scared cat about me, in the first place, and he thinks that plane is made out of gold, too. I thought you invited me down here to a party!" she added. "Who's been here?" she asked suddenly. "Am I interrupting a tête-à-tête?" she asked.

"Oh, Lord no!" answered Tony Bruce. "Hardy Graves had dinner here. But he left. There's been—some unpleasantness around here to-night, Elinor. I hate to even tell you about it. A—a man has been killed on the place, Fagot, a moonshiner."

"Who did it?"

"I don't know. There are some rough fellows on the island to-night. They want this house, I think. At any rate, they blew up my bridge, and they have fired at me. I'm not hurt, though. And I'm not going to let them run me off the island, either."

"But, what on earth do they want with this house?"

"I don't know," he replied. "There's some rubbish about a fortune my grandfather may have left. There were directions to it in a red-lacquer box, according to his will. These fellows have the box, or had it, and this business may have something to do with that. Whatever it is, I want you to come with me now down to the canoe landing. I am going to ferry you across the bay and take you to one of those farm-houses, where you'll be safe for the night."

"And what are you going to do?"

"Why, I am going to come back here

and take care of my own property, of course."

"And leave me over there?"

"You'll be perfectly safe."

"I know. But will *you* be safe?"

"What difference does that make? I mean, you don't think I am going to let you hang around here, and maybe get shot or something, do you?"

"Well, now, I'll tell you something, Mr. Tony Bruce," said Elinor Chase emphatically. Her cheeks showed a spot of color. Her rounded chin and red lips were firm, despite the feminine wisps of chestnut hair showing under the helmet, and despite the freckles on the piquant little nose. "I'll tell you something! If you think I'm going to go away and leave you to get into some trouble——"

"But you don't understand!" Tony insisted. "I wouldn't let you be in any danger, just because of my property being threatened, even if it should, by some stretch of the imagination, concern a lot of money my grandfather left."

"Oh, you wouldn't, eh?" she replied, and plumped down in a chair. "Well, just let me see you budge me? Just let me see you try!" She was furiously determined, that was plain enough. "If you want to leave, don't let me stop you," she continued, and began rocking idly back and forth, tapping her shoe on the floor.

"Keep still," Tony commanded, and turned out the light. He leaned and whispered. "I heard some one outside," he informed her.

She caught his arm.

"Be a sport, Tony," she whispered. "Give me a gun, and let me get in on this."

"*S-sh!*" said Tony Bruce.

Feeling his way in the dark, he tiptoed to the door. He leaned and listened. Outside the door, where he had heard a step, now was silence. But another sound could be heard. It came

from the landward side of the house and seemed no more than fifty feet away. It was a thudding sound, as of a pickax striking the earth. It was too fast for one pickax; he realized that two men, at least, were wielding them.

He felt Elinor's small hand on his arm.

"Somebody's digging out there," she whispered.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT GRAVES SAW.

WHEN Hardy Graves found that Bruce was not pursuing him, he came to a stand. He was not anxious to run on into the darkness. He didn't know whom he might run into, and he had no desire to attract attention by running, and possibly to encourage a shot. He stood quite still under the slender pine tree at the back of the house, hugging the red-lacquer box to his breast and trying to get his breath.

The house was built in the form of a T, the long stem of it running forward to the front porch, the two wings containing a bedroom each on each of the two floors, or four bedrooms in all, while where the stem and the crosspiece joined was the kitchen.

Graves was in the shadow of the crosspiece which ran toward the water. He could see the light of the flare as it flickered over the bay, but could not see the flare itself. The ducks, across the bay, were quacking noisily; he noticed a wedge of them starting to swim over—they were merely small spots of darkness on the water but the light showed the ripple that ran back from the foremost one. He could not see the front of the house but the back of it was faintly visible, and he observed that the door was open at the head of the outside stairway.

If he wanted to, he could climb to the second story, go in the door and creep down the inside stairs, coming upon Tony Bruce from the rear; but he

had no desire to go into the house again. His single idea was to escape from the murderous complications which his visit to Heather Bay had let him in for. He had picked up the red-lacquer box because his shrewd lawyer's mind, even in the heat of a fight, instructed him that this was a thing of value, apparently, to the people he might run into outside, and that, having it, he might be in a position to bargain. Added to that had been an impulsive thought of getting even with Tony Bruce for hitting him by running off with the thing that Bruce had been fighting to keep. It had surprised him that Bruce hadn't kept up the pursuit.

"The next thing for me to do," said Graves to himself, "is to go down to the canoe, push it overboard, and paddle across the bay to civilization."

He remembered that the two paddles, the long one and the short one, were kept standing beside the huge stone fireplace in the living room. He figured he could get along, however, without a paddle; he could find a stick, or if it was necessary, could paddle with his hands, lying on his chest in the bow. The important thing was to get started.

He couldn't go while that light was flaring on the edge of the shore, however. He peered out, and was thrilled to see the airplane returning, dropping as if to land. When it landed, and crashed, and the light was extinguished, he didn't know what to think. Everything was so silent; everything was so dark. He looked around the end of the house and found that even the house itself was dark. It was creepy. It had been more creepy in the house, when he felt that it might be attacked by murderous strangers at any minute; but this was creepy enough. And he didn't like to go down to the canoe until he knew what this seaplane meant.

Suddenly, out of the pitch dark the beam of a flash light sprang from the plane's dim shape. It lit up a man.

Yes, it was Tony Bruce—standing motionless in the water with his arms lifted, the water nearly up to his armpits. It made the hair creep on Graves' scalp to see this apparition spring to life—this head and those arms standing motionless on the water.

Then there was a ripple of laughter, which he recognized to be Elinor's, and the light suddenly went out.

"I wish I had a gun," muttered Graves.

He had an almost overpowering desire to kill Tony Bruce. The man had just struck him in the mouth, knocking him down. Not only that, he had let him come to Heather Bay and be exposed to unreasonable dangers. And now he was allowing Elinor Chase to come to Heather Bay, and on a night when a man had been killed and the air was full of danger. He was letting her come there, and now probably would be carrying her ashore in his arms; while she, not knowing the danger, was laughing as if she was happy to see this upstart young engineer, descendant of a reckless and dissolute grandfather.

"Damn his soul!" said Graves. He could make out faintly that Bruce was carrying the girl ashore; and in another moment he saw the two of them, like two walking shadows, go up to the house together. A dim light came on inside the house. Bruce and the girl were in there together, and God knew what Bruce was telling her about Graves!

For an instant, Graves thought of going back to the house and joining them. But the recollection of how he had felt in there, surrounded by unseen rascals, overcame the hot promptings of jealousy. He made his way silently down the incline toward the canoe, planning, as he went, the story which he would tell Elinor by way of justifying himself and putting Bruce in the wrong. He already had told her a good many things about this young man; the new things

he would tell her would only make her see him as a more unsavory character.

He stumbled over the canoe, which was tied down to a log at each end to keep it from blowing along the ground and getting smashed. As he untied the rope at his end he felt something that made him start.

The canoe had a hole in it. He ran his hands along the smooth bottom. Not one hole, but many. He felt them. They were triangular, such as might have been made by a pick. That was it! The men who had blown up the bridge to hold Bruce on the island had also seen to it that the canoe was made useless.

Graves took a deep breath, ground his long teeth together, and cursed with passionate intensity. He cursed the men who had done this, but most of all he cursed Bruce.

Now what was he to do?

To go back to the house and be besieged by unknown scoundrels was out of the question. The only thing to do was to hide safely until daylight came. Daylight probably would bring the sheriff. Or at least it would bring the man who probably had flown down as far as the beach with Elinor. Some one, no doubt, would find that the bridge was out and would come over in a boat. More than this, it was likely that the ruffians on the island would withdraw before morning. They were not the kind that liked daylight for their operations, whatever their operations might be.

The house was on this end of the island and most of the shrubbery and trees had been cleared out. Stooping so that his long frame in the gray golf suit would be even less visible in the dark, he crept along the beach, protected from the land by the bank, until he had passed the house and had reached the wooded part of the island toward the north. Here he came up from the shore and began peering around for a place

where he would be securely hidden on all sides when daylight came.

As he looked around, he caught a glimpse of a beam of yellow light upon the water. At first he thought it must be lightning; then he found that it remained there.

Creeping soundlessly over the wet pine needles, Graves made his way nearer the point of land beyond which the light seemed to be.

A plan was maturing in his cold, clear mind. Tony Bruce was younger than he was, and being a clean-cut young man of good family, living down in this out-of-the-way place, had a romantic appeal for women. After this hectic night, if all turned out well, Tony and Elinor would probably be better friends than ever. If he, Graves, ever was to win Elinor surely for himself, ever was to revenge himself on this young engineer for having knocked him down, to-night was the opportunity.

He paused by the bole of a holly tree which grew near the edge of an abruptly sloping bank above the water. Feeling around, he found a hole under its roots large enough for the red-lacquer box, and carefully piled pine needles and dead leaves over it until it was hidden. Then he moved forward through the damp bushes and made his way silently to where, kneeling down, he could see where the light came from.

A speed boat was anchored just off shore, and a rowboat, tied at one end to a root and at the other end to the boat's thwart, made a bridge to the land. A lantern stood on the deck. A hat dropped over it kept its beams down, but enough light was reflected from the wood to disclose the rugged head of Isaac Fagot, who was crouched by the outboard engine at the stern. And in the cockpit of the boat sat a sallow, dwarflike creature, a hunchback with a sardonic, shrunken countenance who was chewing with toothless gums on a slice of bread.

Isaac Fagot's gray hair curled out from under his greasy cap as he sat with flinty gray eyes narrowed in thought, staring at the lantern. The light made a dark shadow beside his powerful broken nose, picked out the granitelike power of his features as if hewing them from rock, so that there seemed something unexpectedly human in the ruddiness of his skin.

"Hello, aboard the speed boat," said Hardy Graves.

As quick as a cat, Isaac Fagot had brought up a sawed-off shotgun and had it pointing toward the sound. The gray-flannel shirt hung open over his hairy chest; his large, hairy hands held the gun steady; his mouth was drawn down in a snarl.

"Who's that?" he growled in the deep voice of a seaman.

"A friend," said Graves. "Don't shoot. I'm coming out with my hands up."

And he suited the action to the word.

The dwarf seized the lantern and swung it toward Graves' face, lifting the hat to let the light fall on the lawyer's long, narrow face, with its pale eyes placed high up under the slanting forehead. Fagot stared with flinty eyes at the stranger in the gray golf suit, and then said:

"What do you want?"

"I want to talk to you," said Graves. "I've seen you before; saw you in court several months ago, when you were up charged with transporting liquor and got acquitted. I'm a lawyer. I've just had a fight with Bruce and have left his house. I think maybe you and I can get together to our mutual advantage."

CHAPTER X.

ISAAC FAGOT AND HARDY GRAVES.

FAGOT'S flinty eyes ran over Hardy Graves' long figure, and came to rest on the lawyer's swollen lip and a smear of blood on his chin.

"Come aboard!" Fagot commanded, and turning to the dwarfed hunchback, added: "Keep an eye on the shore."

The hunchback picked up a rifle from beside him and fastened his beady eyes upon the bushes among the pines and holly trees that lined the shore, keeping up, meanwhile, his chewing with toothless gums. Graves balanced himself on the rowboat and crossed to the launch, climbing aboard and sitting down inside on the edge of the side. Fagot resumed his seat, with the shotgun held ready; and the cold, brainy lawyer in a golf suit and the flinty-eyed, roughly dressed Fagot looked at each other silently. Graves was the first to speak.

"I realize perfectly, Fagot," said he, "that there is something extraordinary going on hereabouts to-night. Some of the trouble seems to come from a certain red-lacquer box," he went on, and was pleased to observe the sudden tightening of Fagot's face. "I happen to have been caught in this trouble, while having nothing to do with it. I realize that some things may happen here to-night, or may have happened already, which some people might not want talked about. For that reason, my position is dangerous, because dead men tell no tales. At the same time, I have had a fight with Tony Bruce and I have reasons for hating him. If you are after the red box, or want to get into the house without losing any men, I can help you. By helping you, I could count upon getting even with Bruce.

"But, of course, before I would agree to tell you certain things, I would have to have some guarantee of my own safety, and furthermore I want the girl in the house to be sent away unharmed and in my care."

Graves took out a handkerchief and, pushing back his cap, mopped his slanting brow. The situation seemed a good deal worse than he had expected it would be, now that he had put it in

words, now that this man Fagot was staring at him with those absolutely cold and merciless eyes. He recognized in Fagot some of his own qualities; that is, the man would do what was profitable for himself and not consider stopping at anything, providing his own skin wasn't endangered.

"I want that box," said Fagot. "If Bruce has it, I'm going to take it away from him. If you can help me, I'll agree to what you propose—*after* you've delivered the goods."

Graves mopped his colorless face, and thought. Fagot would, of course, promise him anything. But, supposing he wanted no witnesses of what he would do, supposing he wanted no witnesses about the dead Denby Fagot, the question was, why should he keep his promise?

"I'm going to talk turkey to you, Fagot," said Graves. "I'm a lawyer. If you get into any mess here on this island, you'll need some one to get you out of it. I hate Tony Bruce like the devil. I have reasons for not caring if something should happen to him. You and I should get together."

"That suits me," said Fagot. "Where is that red box?"

"Wait a minute," said Graves. "I've got to see where I am going to come out in this matter. I've got to know that you are acting in good faith with me. Now, let us suppose that you are retaining me as your counsel, beginning at once. I've got to know exactly what your situation is before I can advise you. Not only that, I've got to believe you have confidence in me before I have confidence in you."

Fagot smiled a cold smile.

"You city fellers look down on us fellers," said Fagot, "but I notice you'll come out in the night to drive a good bargain, in spite of your fine clothes."

"Business is business," agreed Graves, blinking his pale eyes around the dark horizon, noting the jump of a

mullet from the surface of the water and the phosphorescent streak of its wake as it darted away. "Here or anywhere else."

"That's right," said Fagot, "and if you tie up with me, and shoot straight, you'll make plenty." —

He was holding out a hairy paw. Graves extended his hand and it was crushed in Fagot's grip.

"You come to me at a good time," said Fagot. "I don't want any more trouble than I've got already and maybe you, with your lawyer's brain, can help me. I said you won't lose if you shoot straight with me, and I mean it. I know who you are, Mr. Graves. And I'm going to show you that I have confidence in you. This man here can swear you came to me and wanted to go into this matter with me. If we are all in the same boat, I can afford to trust you."

"What's the story," said Graves. "Remember, I'll back you up, but I don't intend doing anything that might get me in wrong. I have nothing to gain by it. My proposition is that I will be your attorney, and in addition will help you to get into Bruce's house and get the red box if you want it."

"That's all we do want," said Fagot. "Look here!"

He reached in his gray shirt and drew out a tar-covered piece of canvas. He then opened this, as if it had been a book, and laid it on the decking by the lamp.

"I got the box a week ago," said Fagot; "found it tied up in some old clothes of my mother's. Inside it was a paper describing the location of certain other instructions. It took me a long time to figure it out. Then my brother and I happened to remember something we had heard about our grandfather's will."

"I've heard something about that," said Graves.

"We figured the paper in the box de-

scribed the location of the old man's money, or treasure, or whatever it was. We couldn't come on the grounds here and start digging. We would have to buy the property. I had had a row with Bruce; he had ordered me off his land, and I knew that if I went to see him, and he got fresh, I'd kill him. So I sent my brother. We had the money, enough to buy the property, but it was all we did have. If he refused to sell it, I figured we'd have to get it some other way. So I told my brother not to have any quarrel with him, and I gave him the money."

"Ten thousand dollars," said Graves. Isaac Fagot started.

"How did you know that?" he demanded. "You lawyers have long noses. Anyway, they quarreled, and my brother's body was found with a bullet hole through the forehead. The money was gone."

"Bruce has the money," said Graves. "What's wrong?"

Graves jumped back, for Isaac Fagot had leaned forward with a cry.

"Bruce has that ten thousand dollars?" Fagot cried.

"Yes, he showed it to me," answered the lawyer.

Isaac Fagot dropped heavily back in his seat. His flinty eyes glared at the dwarfed hunchback, who at this announcement had turned to grin at him. Fagot gritted his teeth audibly, shook his head, and compressed his lips. Then he leaned his head forward and put his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

"What's wrong?" Graves repeated.

Fagot didn't answer. He kept his face concealed in his hairy hands. The light rippled across his enormous back. At length he sat up. His face was white.

"I'll continue," he said in a strained voice, "and we'll talk about Bruce later. We dug up the garden to-night, according to the directions we had found on the paper in the box. Under the sun

dial we found this tar-covered canvas, and nothing else. If you will read here, you will see that the canvas says the location of the 'personal property' is described on the wood of the bottom of the box, under the leather lining. You see? It says it is in the tin container, forty-eight feet from the house, the other measurement being given on the bottom of the box."

"Well, where is the box?" asked Graves, shrewdly. "Didn't you say you had it?"

"I had it the other day, and got the paper out of it. My brother had it this evening. That's what he and Bruce quarreled over. Bruce has got the box in his house now. You know that. My man went there to try and get it and Bruce refused to give it up. He says you were there."

"I was," said Graves. "I was just trying to see if you were telling me everything. What is this box worth?"

"Old Anthony Bruce was rich," said Fagot. "Everybody knows that. If he left something hid, it was something worth having. He was my grandfather, just the same as he was Bruce's, and on Bruce's death I would inherit the estate, anyway."

He turned and stared at Graves meaningly when he said this. Graves nodded his head.

"I've got my men digging in places that look likely, forty-eight feet from the house," said Fagot. "But that's looking for a needle in a haystack. The box is the secret."

"That's plain enough," said Hardy Graves, licking his colorless lips. "Now, I'll tell you how to get it. Bruce has it, but he's got his rifle and his revolver ready, and he will put up a fight. I'll tell you how to surprise him. The back door upstairs, the door above the kitchen door, is standing wide open. The cook left it open before dinner. You can get in the house that way, creep down the stairs, and get the drop

on Bruce before he knows you are anywhere about."

Fagot nodded his head.

"The best thing to do," said Graves, "is to attract his attention from the front porch while your men go up the back stairs and get inside. You'd better tell them to take their shoes off."

"That's right," said Fagot. "You say the girl is with him? Anybody else?"

"Not a soul," said Graves. "Now, of course, it won't do to let the girl know I have helped you. That's part of our bargain. I'll tell you what. You don't need this rowboat; there's another one tied over there, anyway. While you are getting things started at the house, I'll just take this boat and row over across to the mainland. Then when you put the girl over there, after you have—after you have gotten hold of Bruce, I can join her on the road and tell her I was coming back to help her; tell her I saw the airplane crash from across the bay."

Fagot climbed down into the rowboat, carrying the shotgun. Here he turned.

"You'll stay right where you are without moving," he said to Graves, "and without making any noise. If you do either, 'Shorty' here will put a slug of lead into you."

Fagot jumped ashore and immediately vanished into the darkness of the shrubbery. Graves turned his head and looked at the hunchback. The creature's shrunk, sallow countenance was lit up with a malicious smile. His beady eyes glimmered greedily in the lamp-light; he licked his sunken lips, and seemed to be hoping that Graves would make some move that would justify him in using the rifle, which he held pointed at Graves' stomach.

"I'm not going to try to escape," said Graves.

The dwarf, holding the rifle pointed with one hand, his finger on the trigger,

picked up a pointed oyster knife with the other and jabbed Graves viciously in the leg.

"Ouch!" said Graves.

The dwarf jabbed him again.

Then Graves saw that he meant him to be quiet. Rubbing the wound, from which blood was trickling down his flesh, the lawyer sat as far as he could from this malicious little grinning beast, and began listening for some sounds from the house. His hope was that Fagot, in endeavoring to overpower Bruce, would kill him. He hardly admitted this to himself, yet he knew he was hoping it. And he knew that he had read some such intent in Fagot's expression.

The only thing that was bothering Graves was how he could get away from the island and either take the box with him or leave it securely hidden under the holly root. If he could overpower this little beast now, and take the row-boat, everything would be all right. He could invent a story which he could tell Elinor to-morrow, to justify the fact that he hadn't stayed around to help her. He could say he didn't know she was expected at the island, or that she had arrived.

He glanced at the dwarf, to see if he showed any signs of relaxing his vigilance. The beady eyes seemed to have been reading his thoughts. The sallow, shrunken countenance wrinkled into a horrible toothless grin, and the fearful little creature raised the knife again threateningly.

"If I don't get off of this damned island pretty soon," thought Graves to himself, "there's no telling what may happen to me."

He was not exactly afraid, however. Now he had some plans of his own to work out. That was quite a different thing from being involved involuntarily with another person's troubles. The love of money had always been his chief passion. If he could get the box, and

in the same night arrange it so that Tony Bruce no longer stood between himself and Elinor, then it wouldn't be a bad night's work. He could afford to run some risks for that.

He had a feeling that Elinor liked Tony and that this was why she continued to hold off giving himself a definite answer. He felt that he himself stood second in her regard. A cold passion, mixed of jealousy and revenge, determined him to see to it that after this night he would be first.

The dwarf was grinning at him again. Hardy Graves cursed beneath his breath, and the dwarf moved the knife threateningly.

From the direction of the house suddenly came the sound of shots. At the same moment the reeds of the bank rustled, and the dwarf pointed his rifle at them.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ASSAULT.

SOMEBODY'S "digging out there," Elinor repeated.

"Yes," Tony agreed in a whisper, "and just now there was some one on the front porch. Listen!"

They stood together in the pitch-dark living room of the house and listened. Elinor's hand rested lightly on his sleeve. He could sense her fragrance in the dark. She was not in the least afraid, and while he admired her for that, he wondered how much of it was due to the fact that, not knowing the type of men who were on the island, she underestimated the possible consequences both to herself and to him. From what he had seen of them—the one with the red mustache at the bridge; the pink-nosed fellow who had come insolently to the front porch; and the granite-featured, gray-haired Isaac Fagot—he did not like to think of what might happen to Elinor if he himself were shot.

"Yes," she whispered, "I heard him

move then! He's moving toward the door."

"Elinor, don't you see that you've got to go?"

"Why should I go, and not you?" she whispered. "Why should I run out and leave you in this mess?"

"You see how it is," he insisted, and shook her by the arm. "Those men out there are digging right now; they may have found the money, or whatever it is, that old Anthony Bruce spoke of in his will. That money, if it is there, belongs to me, and if I get it for myself, it means a great deal to me. It would change my life."

"How?" she whispered.

"I'm not going into that," he replied impatiently. "I'm just trying to show you how important to me it is that you let me send you off in the canoe. If you weren't here, for instance, I could attack those men who are digging, and make them stop."

"Why not do it now?"

"Because I am not going to let you in for what might follow, silly! Certainly, you can see that they might rush the house. There'd be a fight, and God knows what might happen!"

"Have you got another gun?" she whispered.

"Yes," he answered, "in the pistol case. Why?"

"Let me have this," she said. She drew his arm toward her and took hold of the automatic which he had taken from his pocket. Her grasp was so insistent that he let her have it for fear that it might be discharged if he resisted her. "Now you get the other one," she said.

He heard her moving away from him.

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"S-sh! Nowhere," she responded.

He made his way in the black room to the mahogany side table on which lay the walnut pistol case. At one time

this had held two dueling pistols, the property of old Anthony Bruce, but these now hung on the wall and the two automatics were kept in the case instead. As Tony reached the table he felt it tremble, and he heard a scuffle of khaki clothing against it.

"What are you doing?" he asked of her.

At that instant there was a small crash and a tinkle. On this side of the room, the windows, a row of them side by side, were set shoulder-high in the wall of the log-built house. This sound was as if she had broken out one of the little panes. He moved toward her, curious, but was startled when from the wall where the window had crashed a gun went off, sounding with an enormous explosion in the closed room. Elinor fired again; then jumped down from the table.

"There!" she whispered jubilantly. "You don't hear them digging any more, do you? I guess that will stop them!"

"You are just an irresponsible little fool!" he told her, and spoke out loud in his anger—his anger because she was so precious to him and because she was bringing danger on herself.

"That's a fine way to talk when I'm trying to protect your property!" she replied sharply.

"I don't want you to protect my property," he replied.

"Oh, you don't, huh?"

"No! Most certainly not!"

"Oh, is that so!"

They relapsed into silence, their angry breathing audible in the soundlessness which had fallen. The acrid gun smoke drifted pungently by their nostrils. The community of feeling which had come from danger now was broken by their disagreement. This unreasonably made Tony even angrier with her. What they must do at once, he concluded, was go to the canoe and push off. The trouble was, he couldn't think

of a way to broach this to Elinor, a way which would get her consent. "If she refuses," he thought, "I'll just take her away by force."

Aloud, but in a low tone, he said:

"Will you go to the canoe with me now that you have started things? It's the least you can do."

"And leave them to get your money?"

"That's my business," he replied rudely.

She kept silence for a minute; then she laughed.

"Is that a compliment, Tony? Do you mean you think more of me, of my safety, than of a possible fortune?"

"That's my business," said Tony.

"I won't go with you unless you answer my question," she continued.

"This is no time for flirtatious nonsense," he said.

"Oh, so this is nonsense, is it?" she asked.

He found her arm and pulled her toward the door.

"Come on," he insisted.

She resisted. He had to drag her to the side door, and made more noise than he liked. He was about to unlatch the door when, with astounding loudness, a blow was struck against it, a heavy blow, as from an ax. The two-inch chestnut boards trembled and the hinges groaned.

Elinor cried "Oh!" and drew close to him.

"W-what was that?" she whispered. And at the same moment another blow made the heavy door clatter.

"This way!" said Tony, speaking in her ear.

He was leading her past the steps that came down from upstairs, on his way to the door on the other side of the living room, when from the top of the stairs a curse dropped out of the darkness, there was a sound of boots slipping on the wooden stairs, and something large and heavy came thudding and crashing down at their feet.

The thing rose and leaped upon them; Tony felt the embrace of a rough sleeve; smelled the brine and sweat of the fellow's clothing; tried unsuccessfully to shake him free and, as they staggered sidewise, was afraid to shoot for fear of hitting the girl. They struck the dining table. A leaf of it rose up at their impact, the table slipped away from them and they crashed to the floor, the table leaf dropping back down with a slam.

Tony's head and one shoulder were against the floor, the man was straddling one of his hips and, panting viciously, was trying to break free and get entirely on top, when the darkness was suddenly displaced by light. Tony, his nostrils drawing in dust, his nose against the boards, could see suddenly a wet rubber boot, a large, grimy hand. Then, as suddenly as the light had come on there was a thudding sound near his ear; the vicious pressure of the man's strength was abruptly relaxed, and the whole heavy frame plunged against him and slid limply to the floor.

Bruce had scrambled up before the man was well down; saw in a flash the clubbed pistol and Elinor's white face. But he had time to see no more than this, for a heavy-set, pockmarked creature, whom he had never seen before, was hurtling upon him from midway of the staircase from upstairs. The knocks on the door, no doubt, had been intended to divert his attention while the men had by some means got in through the back way upstairs. This thought ran through his mind even as he stepped sidewise and met the oncoming face with a straight right hand to the jaw. This was enough to divert the fellow's lunge and to give Bruce a chance to pick up the gun he had dropped on scrambling up from the floor.

Coming up with the gun, Tony Bruce glimpsed the pock-marked fellow crawling aimlessly up from beside the far end of the room. His lunge had taken

him that far; apparently for the instant he was stunned from the impact, while Elinor, drawing the bolt to the side door, was crying:

"Come on, Tony! Quick!"

She had the bolt drawn. He couldn't let her go out of the opening door alone. He ran toward her slender figure in the flying coat and leggings as it slipped through the door. He leaped faster as he heard her scream. At the doorway he saw her, just beyond him, standing still before the menace of the granite-featured, gray-haired Isaac Fagot who, in the beam from the light inside the room, was revealed facing her, a sawed-off shotgun ready in his big, hairy hands.

CHAPTER XII.

THE UNEXPECTED.

FAGOT'S attention had been held for an instant by the sight of Elinor running into him. Tony Bruce, therefore, saw Fagot an instant before Fagot saw him. He was afraid to shoot, however. Fagot's gun was pointed directly at Elinor's chest; even if Tony killed Fagot with his first shot, it was probable that the shotgun would go off, and its scattered bullets from the sawed-off muzzle would most likely strike the girl.

Tony Bruce had only the fraction of an instant in which to decide what to do. This was a crucial moment; if Fagot got the drop on him now, the game was up, so far as the struggle between them for possession of Heather Bay this night was concerned. And Bruce had heard enough about the exploits of this cold-blooded smuggler, moonshiner, and poacher to know that he would not be likely to leave behind him witnesses who might be able to send him to jail. More than one man had been found by the roadside in this section of the country, a bullet hole through his head—usually from behind—and it was generally understood, while never proven, that such a one had

been a rival of the Fagot gang in the selling of "Princess Anne Rye" in this section; or had incurred the gang's suspicion or hostility. If Fagot got hold of him now, Bruce realized, the outlook was not pretty either for himself or Elinor.

Quicker than thought, therefore, Tony Bruce, instead of continuing out of the doorway, drew the door shut and shot the bolt. He turned then and ran across the room, ignoring the two rascals who were dazedly climbing to their feet, opened the door on the other side of the house, and darted out.

He had expected to meet here the man who had wielded the ax, but that individual, having succeeded in creating a diversion, had disappeared, leaving the ax on the flagged walk which led down the slope to the canoe, fifty feet away. Tony's eye caught these details as he plunged out into the night and turned, running to the right. His plan had formed on the instant: to race quietly around behind the house and come up out of the darkness on Fagot from behind.

He ran, therefore, on his toes, and fast because of his memory of Elinor standing there with her hands involuntarily raised. He had his automatic ready in his right hand, for he knew now that he would not hesitate to shoot Fagot, if this were necessary. The grass and the wet pine needles made his footsteps silent over the springy topsoil. He turned the corner of the house at full speed, crossed behind it, and was slowing up to turn the next corner when something struck him with a terrific impact.

He was knocked against the house, and part of his breath knocked out of him. A faint reflection from the open side door on this side of the house enabled him to see the great figure climbing up from the ground, and to see the shotgun, which had spun against the cedar near the dogwood tree.

He was slightly dazed by the impact. To his mind, all of these things had happened simultaneously. Obviously Fagot had been trying to get around the house as quickly as he could, perhaps trying to intercept what he considered to be Bruce's attempt at flight. They had met at this corner, and now Fagot, climbing up, was upon him. Bruce lifted his gun, but the poacher, heavier and bigger than the engineer, had not been dazed by the collision, for one thing, because he had not been flung against the juniper logs of the house. He had been quicker, therefore, in recovering from the spill. He had the muzzle of Tony Bruce's automatic in his big fist before Bruce had brought it round to fire. Its bullet, when Bruce's finger pulled the trigger, went harmlessly up into the damp night air.

Fagot twisted the gun outward, straining the ligaments of Bruce's hand. Bruce raised his left hand and pushed the rugged face with its hairy bristles back and away from him. Fagot was trying to get hold of him with the arm which was not engaged by the pistol; Bruce was trying to break free, so as to be able to hit him. His maneuver of pushing the fellow's head back separated them somewhat, but Fagot, his arms like iron, was the stronger of the two. He wrenched the gun free with his left hand from Bruce's right; but the shove against his face sent him backward, and Bruce, recovering his own balance, swung a right-hand blow which turned the poacher's stumble to a fall.

No such blow could have stunned that stalwart animal. He was rising like a cat to his feet when Bruce jumped over his legs to get the shotgun. He had got up before Bruce's hand had grasped the shotgun's wet barrel. For one instant the gray-haired brute was confused. He hadn't seen the jump and was surprised at not finding Bruce in front of him. In that instant, Bruce,

not waiting to reverse the gun, swung its stock over his shoulder and down on the side of the granitelike skull as it was wheeling toward him.

Fagot fell. Bruce did not wait to see the further result. The pistol shot would bring the others on the run, he suspected, and Elinor was to be thought of first of all. Not waiting to find his automatic, but lugging the sawed-off shotgun, he ran toward the door and almost collided with her. She had been circling the fighters, as he saw in a flash, her own automatic held ready for action. Apparently, she was incurably venturesome, and this made him angrily intent upon getting her safe away.

"This way!" he said, catching her by the wrist.

He led her quietly but hurriedly toward the rear of the house, past the side of the garage, until they were in deep darkness near the line of small cedars that marked the end of the old rose garden. Here he turned toward the water and, on reaching the shore, turned to the left and led her back along the shore toward the house.

He wanted to launch the canoe.

The house was lighted by the single light that Elinor had turned on during the struggle. The door toward the water was open, so that a beam of light shone out along the flagged walk and lent a hint of light even down to the water's edge. Bruce made Elinor bend low. He moved slowly, keeping in the shadow of the two small pines near the shore. He was fifty feet only from the open house door and around the house he could hear now the sound of footsteps and the call of excited voices.

If any of the intruders should think to turn on the light button by the house door, the one which lighted the canoe landing, he and Elinor would be brilliantly revealed. If any one of them happened to wander down toward the water, searching for them, they would surely be found; and if found they

would be in a corner from which there was no escape, except by taking to the water, which wouldn't help at all.

Accordingly, he breathed a sigh of relief when he came to the canoe. Some one already had untied the rope at the upper end of it. He went down and untied the other end. The canoe lay at right angles to the shore, so he turned it over on its keel and slid it silently along the soft sand and into the water. Elinor, on the other side of it, a small, dark shadow in the almost pitch blackness, helped by pushing the shell-like craft.

It was launched without a sound. Bruce was holding it to the shore and reaching up a hand to help Elinor in when his eye was caught by what seemed to be bars of white luminous metal rising at various places in the bottom. The luminous stuff spread on the bottom of the canoe, which slowly sank until only its bow was on the sand and its side edges were above the salt water. Bruce cursed under his breath.

"They've put holes in it," he whispered in Elinor's ear, for she had come around to him when the phosphorescent water had begun to pour in. "We've got to get away quick."

She followed him as he bent low and began to move rapidly along the shore, past the house, toward the wooded end of the island. He realized that if he was to hide Elinor from the men, in a place where she would not be seen even in daytime, he would have to go to that end of the island, and would be lucky if he could find such a place at all. There were overhanging edges of the bank, but if she hid under one of them she would be visible from the water; while anywhere she hid on the island, in no matter what thick shrubbery, they could find her in daylight if they beat the island long enough. He himself could swim the bay and get across to the mainland, but Elinor, he knew, could never do it.

He was considering the possibility of hiding her securely while he swam the choppy bay and walked the five miles or more to the sheriff's residence or to the nearest telephone. He had about decided to do this, and was turning to speak to her about it, when she ran forward and caught his arm.

"Look, Tony," she whispered, her lips close against his ear. "No, over this way; on the water. See the light?"

Her arm was extended past his shoulder, straight ahead, toward a clump of bushes which, beyond a big holly tree, were silhouetted as a darker blot against the slightly less dark blot of the water beyond them. On the water he saw, following her arm, a faint gleam, the reflection of some yellowish light hidden beyond the bushes.

"Wait here!" he whispered.

Holding the sawed-off shotgun ready for use, he crept silently over the wet ground until, by stooping, he could peer under the top of the bushes and through an opening get a glimpse of the water beyond. For a moment he remained motionless in surprise.

He could see the top part of a speed boat. On the square of deck separating the engineer's cockpit and the forward cockpit sat a lantern, its rays dimmed and sent downward by a felt hat lying on it. The light from it was sufficient to reveal, however, the outline of a curious creature, a hunchback, small enough to be called a dwarf. He sat hunched over a rifle which, while it lay on his knees, was ready to be fired at either one or two men who were sitting hunched just beyond him.

The first of these men Tony Bruce recognized by the tweed cap pulled down over the long, narrow face. No one but Hardy Graves had the cheek bones and eyes set so high up in the skull; and the gray golf suit confirmed the identification. At first Tony thought the second man sat in a shadow. He was of medium height and was sitting

with his arms wrapped around his wet body, as if cold. Then the man rolled his eyes and Tony saw that the jaundiced whites were gleaming against the black countenance of his man Jim!

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHANGE IN PLANS.

TONY made up his mind on the instant. The dwarf's profile was toward him; the creature, in fact, was facing Graves, with an evil smile on his sallow, shrunken face, and was waving a pointed knife. Keeping his shotgun held ready, Tony Bruce stepped noiselessly around the bush behind which he had hidden, aimed the shotgun at the dwarf's head, and said:

"Put up your hands!"

The dwarf started as if he had been stung, turned his gnomelike countenance over his humped shoulder and grasped his rifle. But on seeing the sawed-off shotgun looking him in the eye, he ran up his yellow claws and sat there in the half light with his toothless mouth hanging open and his beady eyes wide. The rifle slipped from his knees, and Graves, in a quick motion, as if he might have been longing for such a chance, snatched it up.

Jim sat without moving, his black face tinged with gray; but when he recognized his employer, his teeth showed in a twitching and uneasy smile. He was too thoroughly scared by his situation, apparently, to risk a feeling of triumph.

"Hullo, Bruce," said Hardy Graves in a low tone. His face wore a curious, secretive expression. "Come aboard. Glad to see you. This beast here has been sticking me with knives."

"S-sh!" Bruce warned. He balanced along the rowboat tied to the shore and scrambled into the speed boat. "What's up, Graves?" he whispered. "Hello, Jim! How did you get here?"

"I tried to swim de channel, Mist'

Tony. De current got me, an' I'd 'a' plumb drowned hadn't some white men been driftin' by in a boat. Dey brung me here."

"That boat, eh?" Bruce indicated a second rowboat tied to a dead sapling along the shore. "What are you doing here, Graves? They find you?"

Graves nodded and licked his lips.

"Tell you what, Tony," he whispered. There was the clang of some secret emotion in his voice. "They've gone to dig up your grandfather's treasure. They took the red box away from me and that's where the secret was: the directions for finding the treasure, or whatever it is, were written on the bottom of it, under the lining and right on the wood. Now, listen! Most of the men have gone back across the bay; there are only two up there digging. Fagot wouldn't let any more stay around, because he wants it all for himself. If you take my advice, you and Jim will go up there and surprise them with an attack from the rear. You can trust me to take care of this beast here."

He jabbed the dwarf in the stomach with the rifle barrel, so hard that the small creature groaned.

Bruce's heart began to beat fast. Up to now the legendary treasure, lost when his old grandfather died, had been a figment of romance to him; even the contest he had made with the Fagots, to keep the place and to keep them off of it, had been based more upon a dislike of them than of any feeling that there was a real treasure upon the island. Now that he heard from Graves that Fagot was off digging in the very spot that his grandfather had indicated, and getting his directions from the very red box which had been mentioned in the will, he began to grow intensely excited.

He did not stop to compare Graves' statement of the small number of men with the fact that he himself had ob-

served a larger number around the house. Nor did he think to ask Graves how the red box had come into Fagot's possession, when Graves himself had run off with it. He assumed that Fagot had captured Graves and had taken the box from him; the fact that the dwarf was the lawyer's jailer confirmed his impression, and he jumped at the attorney's advice.

"That's a good idea," he said to Graves. "How do you feel about it, Jim?"

"Gimme a gun," said Jim, his black face lighting with a warped smile. "I ain't skeert of them two men, come I got a gun. De onliest thing skeert me, Mr. Tony, was all 'em daid folks an' dem noises round de house when ain't nobody knowed whar dey come from. Yas, suh. Ever since de men done brung me to dis boat, a while ago, an' I seen Mr. Graves was in de same fix, de onliest thing I been skeert of was dem men might shoot us to git shet of us."

"Well, I should say to both of you," said Bruce, "that if you don't want to help me, you can take one of these boats and row across the bay to the mainland and get out of all this."

"Well," remarked Graves eagerly, "there's something in that. This isn't my funeral. By the way, where's Elinor?"

"I am here," said a clear, sweet voice from the shore, and Elinor, her flying helmet torn from her head, and her bobbed chestnut hair curling about her piquant face, appeared in the dim light that the lantern cast upon the shrubbery. "You are not going back on Tony, are you, Hardy?" she asked. "You are not afraid, are you?"

"Well, not likely!" replied Graves, smiling in a strained manner. "I have just been advising him what to do; and I'll go with him, too, if he thinks best, although I'm no shot with a rifle."

"Fine!" exclaimed Tony. "That will

make it three to three. Tie up this fellow, Jim; and you can have this pistol of his, too. Hurry up with it. Elinor," he said to the girl, "you are going to do me a favor and row this boat across the bay. Then take the main road to the left, turn in at the second farmhouse—you can make it in an hour and a half—and telephone the sheriff to come down here with his deputies. We want to catch the whole blooming outfit. Will you do this for me?"

He knew that unless she thought she was doing something helpful, she wouldn't go across the bay to safety, so he had thought of this sheriff idea to persuade her.

"You know I'll always back you up, Tony," she replied, brushing the damp curls from her forehead. "Hardy!"

"What?" Graves, who had climbed from the speed boat, turned his long frame and stood staring down at her in the half light, licking his lips. Her bright brown eyes stared into his for some moments, but she said nothing. Her face, half in shadow, was inscrutable.

"What?" Graves asked again. Tony Bruce, in spite of his excitement, felt a twinge of jealousy at the unspoken understanding which seemed to exist between the two.

"Nothing," said Elinor Chase, looking down and brushing some pine needles from the khaki flying coat. "Go ahead."

"She didn't want him to expose himself to this danger," Tony Bruce thought to himself. "But she was willing for me to!"

Aloud, but in a low tone, he said:

"We'll leave this rowboat for Elinor. Jim, stick a rag in that fellow's mouth and tie it. That's right. Now you come along the shore here. Step in, Graves. We'll take this boat and scull along the shore, so they won't hear us coming through the woods." His voice dropped to a whisper. "Not a sound,

now! The shore dips in toward the house around the second bend. Keep perfectly silent and we can get ashore and open fire on them from behind before they even know we are alive."

He picked up an oar, after the other two had seated themselves in the second rowboat, and slipped it over the stern. Jim pushed off from the shore, and after the boat was clear of the cat-tails, Bruce turned its head parallel to the shore and began to scull. Each steady urge of the blade through the water caused a swirl of phosphorescent light to curl around it and follow it. The small waves running back from the bow were crested with light, which shone white against the water's deep blackness.

Along the line of shore, where the reeds met the water, hung a row of jellyfish, impregnated with phosphorous. As the little swell from the boat touched them, they glowed and swayed like goblin lanterns, with an eerie light. The night stretched big and black on all sides, broken only by the ghostly phosphorous and by the occasional sound of a mullet, jumping clear of the water, landing with a splash, and flashing away to the depths in phosphorescent zigzags like underwater lightning.

A shimmer of far-distant lightning stamped the pine tops for a moment darkly against the cloud-black heaven. From the darkness of the unseen void down the bay floated a bullfrog's bel-
low.

"This is a fool's job," said Hardy Graves bitterly.

CHAPTER XIV.

TREACHERY.

A FOOL'S job," Graves repeated after they had sculled halfway out around the wooded point. He was furious that Elinor's presence had forced him into accompanying Tony Bruce. He was bitterly suspicious of what

Bruce might have told her about his desertion when she had been expected at the house, and jealous at the interest she had displayed in furthering Tony's fortunes.

What Graves wanted to do was get the red box in his hands again, and get away from the island. He was beginning to feel nervous about leaving it hidden under the holly tree's root. If Bruce should fall into Fagot's clutches in the present foolhardy assault; if he should tell Fagot that he, Graves, had been last seen with the box, then Fagot, even if he couldn't get hold of Graves, would certainly search the island. And Graves knew that the pine needles he had dug up to cover the root would show in daylight that they had been displaced. To men familiar with these woods and marshes the box's hiding place would probably not long be a mystery.

"I tell you what you can do," replied Tony Bruce, not ceasing to scull the rowboat around the point. "When we reach the landing place, Jim and I will get out, and you can take the boat and cross the bay."

"And have you tell Elinor that I turned out to be a quitter?" asked the lawyer bitterly.

"I wouldn't tell her anything," replied Bruce.

Graves was silent. He had become himself infected with some of Fagot's fever of interest in what roistering old Anthony Bruce had hidden on the island. But he had an additional interest in it. He had heard Tony Bruce say, more than once, that he was too poor to consider marriage. Should the secret hiding place turn out to contain valuable jewels, bonds, or gold, this would further add to the chance that Tony would seek and win Elinor. Graves' hatred and fear of the situation he now found himself in turned doubly against Bruce as the cause of it all. His desires fused to a white heat in one

hard decision. He would get the red box and get away from this deadly island, or know the reason why.

"No," he said, after Bruce had sculled for several more minutes, "I'll go along with you."

They came out of the shadow of the point and made around its end. The sky toward the south was lighter. The storm, as so often happened, had worked around Heather Bay without striking. Its mutterings, and an occasional flutter of light against its blackness, could be seen to the west, but above the southern horizon a few stars peered palely through and the edge of the western break in the clouds was tinged to silver as if the moon were about to rise.

"What's dat?" inquired Jim in a whisper.

Bruce stopped sculling at Jim's lifted black hand.

"I heerd somebody walking thu de woods," the negro whispered, "like he was follering along de way we was goin'."

They remained motionless on the glassy water in the protected elbow of the shore. There was no sound except the lapping of the water against the weeds and the chirring of crickets and katydids.

Bruce renewed his sculling, moving slowly and being very careful to make no noise. They were turning back now toward the east, having rounded the long wooded point, and were nearing the shore which stood free of large trees near the entrance to the cleared land around the house. This was on the opposite side of the island from the canoe landing. The island and the house sheltered it from the dying wind. They glided without a sound along the shore. A bird cheeped and rustled in the shrubbery, a little school of mullets splashed and darted away, but aside from this there was only the infinitesimal *slap-slap* of wavelets against the

flat bottom of the bow. Now they had passed the thicker shrubbery and could see in the faint light an almost invisible aperture where there was no shrubbery at all.

Bruce turned the boat's nose and they beached with a soft grinding of the boat's bottom upon the sand.

Graves, in the bow, got out first and pulled the boat higher on the beach as its nose rose at the relief from his weight. Jim went next and moved the boat farther up. Bruce shipped the oar quietly, picked up the shotgun, and followed them upon the land.

"Listen, Mist' Tony!"

Jim's keener ears had heard the sound first. Now they all heard it, drifting toward them on the soft, moist breeze. A delicate thud. Another. Another. Then two, quickly and together.

"They's diggin' ag'in!" whispered Jim.

"Yes," agreed Tony Bruce, trembling with excitement. "I'll go first, and you two follow me, because I know the path exactly. I want to get right up on them before we shoot. Surprise is half of the battle. Now—quietly!"

He began creeping stealthily along the sandy path that led from the boat landing to where the road turned into the gateway leading to the grounds around the house. The thudding sound grew louder as he approached. It seemed to be coming from two different places, about the same distance in its direction from the house, but at different points. He wondered if Fagot were digging without knowing exactly where to dig. The sounds certainly seemed to indicate this; or that the red box had directed him to dig in various places in order to raise up all the treasure.

Tony's excitement increased. Coming around the bentwood fence, he saw the lighted windows of the house. The thudding was distinct now. And of a sudden he saw one of the diggers—saw

a pickax flying downward against the yellow light of a window about fifty feet behind it; heard immediately the soft thud. Another, another, and another. Here were four men, at least, in spite of what Hardy Graves had told him. And a shadow, two shadows, against the curtains told him of more.

He would need more than ever the advantage of catching them by surprise; and he wanted to work closer to them.

He rose from his crouching posture and began once more to advance. Hardly had he taken the first step, however, before a shot exploded behind him. He turned, crouching involuntarily, stiff with the unexpectedness of it. He had just crouched when a second shot sounded deafeningly, not twenty feet away. The line of its flash showed how he would have been the recipient of its bullet had he not ducked.

"Mah Gawd!" It was Jim's voice whispering beside him. He was afraid to fire in return for fear of hitting Hardy Graves, who was somewhere there in the dark.

As he hesitated, he heard the crashing of shrubbery as some one went running back along the way they just had come. At the same moment, from the direction of the house, came a fusillade of shots. The bullets whirled by, cutting the leaves near his head. He threw himself on the ground, and found Jim lying beside him.

Whatever element of surprise he had hoped for in his attack now was certainly gone. More than this, the defenders had become the attackers.

"D-dis here sho' ain't no safe place," he heard Jim tremblingly mutter.

CHAPTER XV.

STRANGE BEHAVIOR.

KEEP your head down," Tony advised the colored man, who was trembling so beside him that the damp pine tags and holly leaves rustled. "Let

them use up their shells for a minute, and then we'll give it to them."

"Ain't n-no danger of me puttin' mah haid up!" responded Jim through chattering teeth. "Mah trouble is to keep mah feet fum up an' runnin' off wid me. Here, M-Mist' T-Tony; take dis here gun."

"You keep it. You'll need it in a minute," replied the white man. A bullet cut through a sapling by their heads.

"I ain't gwine need no gun or nothin'," Jim responded, "if de good Lawd ever let me git down to dat boat."

He laid the automatic pistol by Bruce's hand and began to crawl on his stomach, as flat as a snake, toward the boat they had just left on the sand. Tony realized the uselessness of trying to persuade him out of such a funk, so he let him go.

The shots from the neighborhood of the house had slackened somewhat. The place where he and Jim had been lying was protected by a slight rise in the ground and the bullets had gone over their heads. Bruce put Jim's automatic in his pocket and, dragging the shotgun, began to crawl toward the house. The ground was somewhat uneven and he used this and the intervening trees as screens against the fire from the poachers, which had begun to slacken as he had expected. He also moved toward the side, so that their shots into the darkness would miss him by being aimed at the first shot they had heard.

He had reached a point from which he had a clear way to the diggers in front of the house, and was bringing his shotgun up to his shoulder, when he was surprised at hearing a pistol shot from the far end of the house, seemingly from beside the garage.

He couldn't understand what this might be, but without waiting further he let the sawed-off shotgun go in the direction of the spot where he had last seen the diggers. The gun was a repeater and he sprayed the slugs along

the full length of the side of the house. A splatter of shots replied. One of them came from his own front door. Two others from beside his own house. Involuntarily he ducked at the whine of the bullets, although they already had passed him.

He was planning to crawl farther to one side and nearer the house, hoping for a visible target, when the night was pierced by the shrill, high sound of a whistle.

It seemed to have been a signal, for the shooting from around the house abruptly ceased. Tony kept quite still for a few moments, expecting that they might be planning to surround him. He listened intently, but could hear nothing.

Then on the damp air shrilled two high whistles.

The lights in his house went out. Everything now was quite dark where he lay in the shadow of the pine trees of the clearing. The bulk of the house was dimly visible in the growing starlight, but smaller objects melted into the dark background. There was no sound of any kind from the men who a few minutes before had been digging, first, and next, shooting. Tony was puzzled. The whistle had been such as is used by postmen in some localities; it brought up memories out of his childhood and made the silence the more mysterious.

He wondered if the shot down near the garage could have had anything to do with it. The shot which had been fired at him from behind, when he and Graves and Jim were debarking, had been fired by some one who had dashed off toward the north end of the island, while the garage was toward the south.

He couldn't understand it, and he couldn't figure what had happened to Graves. The thought occurred to him that Graves might have fired at him from behind, and have dashed off into the darkness; but for the lawyer to

leave him and Jim and go off by himself on this dark island he dismissed as too improbable to be considered. If Graves had been going to do such a despicable thing, he would have taken the boat afterward and have escaped to the mainland. No, he concluded, Graves was probably lying still near the path he and Jim had crept up; or might have joined Jim in his retreat to the boat.

Tony lay perfectly still for perhaps five or ten minutes, listening. If the poachers were planning to creep up and surround him in the dark, he wanted to hear the first of their footsteps, and he held the shotgun ready.

But he heard nothing. Nothing, that is, except the drip of moisture from the trees, the chirring of a multitude of crickets, the whine of the mosquitoes, which had begun to become annoying, and from far off the deep bass *kuh-chunk* of a frog. The breeze had died down, and gradually his sharpened senses became aware that the night was becoming slightly more diluted with light. Now, even though the lights were out in the house, he could make out the line of the wistaria-covered post supporting the front porch, whereas previously this had been invisible to him.

He could see no one, however; and the silence was unbroken. It was as if the whistle, like a stroke of twelve in the fairy tales, had caused the invaders of the island to vanish.

In order to see if he could rouse a response, Tony took out the automatic and fired twice into the logs of the side of the house, the bullets crossing the place where the diggers had been. He waited, but there was no answer.

He got up then and, impatient at the delay, began creeping carefully toward the house, glancing in every direction and pausing now and then to listen intently. He heard nothing at all. Making his way to the porch, he stood to one side of the front door, which was

swinging open, and knocked on the door frame with the pistol muzzle.

The sound echoed in the house, but there was no other result. Bruce crawled on his hands and knees into the doorway, into the house, and across to the inside wall, holding his automatic ready, as he had laid the shotgun down on the porch. He rose stealthily to his feet beside the electric-light switch and felt for it with his finger.

For a second, before pressing the button, he listened. The darkness was absolute in the living room. He heard nothing in the house, and from outside nothing except the sudden eerie wail of a screech owl. Lifting his automatic, he pressed the button.

The living room sprang into being, but no one was in it. Tony took in at a glance the huge stone fireplace, big enough to hold a piano; the settee under the long front windows; the two opposite side doors, which were closed; and the doors on either side of the fireplace, leading to the kitchen and a bedroom on one side, and to a bedroom on the other. These doors were open.

Before moving from where he stood, Tony noted that the living room had been turned upside down. The mattress had been pulled off of the settee. The square mahogany liquor case had been broken open, but the four cut-glass decanters inside had not been disturbed; none of the liquor in them, even, had been taken. All of the drawers of the desk, and of the side table, had been pulled open; the cushions had been torn off of the chairs; even some of the books had been pulled out of the bookcases.

Holding his automatic ready for instant use, Tony went through the downstairs rooms without finding anybody; but noting that these rooms, too, had been turned upside down. He next went upstairs, where everything also was topsy-turvy. He locked the back upstairs door, came downstairs, put a

flash light in his pocket, switched off the house lights, locked all the doors and let himself out of the back door of the kitchen.

He was trying to find out what had been the meaning of the shot from the garage; what had been the meaning of the mysterious disappearance of all these men. He thought for a moment that they might be herded in the garage, but on approaching it silently in the dark, he found that they were not there. Going beyond the garage, he noticed, in the growing light from the moon that was invisible but was rising behind the bank of clouds, that the sundial in the rose garden was overturned.

He crossed to it. Flashing his light, he discovered that an excavation, perhaps two feet deep, had been made under the sundial's base. At the side of the excavation he found a dark object. Picking it up, he discovered that it was a square of tar-covered canvas, with writing on the inner side where the tar had not been spread. Some one apparently had tried to tear it; there were the big finger prints. It had been crumpled up till the tar had cracked and peeled, and had been thrown down beside the small excavation.

Tony smoothed the canvas out on the ground and turned the light on it. The characters of the writing were somehow familiar, and so was the color of the ink—a reddish purple. He remembered suddenly that it was the same ink, the same handwriting, as his old grandfather's will. Tense and excited, he leaned close and read the blotted canvas:

... ersonal property ... scribed in the will is in the tin conta ... ured 48 ft. from the west side of the main house, the other ... surement being given on the ... ttom of the . ed-la ... er box.

Some of the words were illegible, but the idea was plain enough. The red box, on its bottom, held the secret of

the other dimension, the clew to where the personal property was buried.

Graves had gone off with the red box, and had been captured by Fagot. If he had been captured with the red box, why had Fagot turned the house upside down? Doubtless, Tony figured, because he had done that *before* he had caught Hardy Graves. After getting the box from Graves, doubtless he had come back to the house to dig for the "tin container." And, if so, this would explain the whistle and the consequent silence.

If Isaac Fagot had suddenly found the tin container, naturally he would have called off his men; they would have slipped off silently to their boats, and would have left the island.

As Tony was thinking over these things he was also walking along parallel with the house and about fifty feet away from it. As he expected, he found signs of digging. Before capturing the red box, he reasoned, Fagot had put his men to work digging in various places that were approximately forty-eight feet from the west side of the main house. Bruce examined each of these holes, but found no sign of a "tin container" having been removed.

Nevertheless, it seemed probable that Fagot had called off his men because he had found the old man's hoard. As Bruce came to this conclusion, he stopped angrily and stood with bent head in the darkness, trying to figure out some way of circumventing Fagot's disposal of what he might have found, some way of getting hold of the granite-faced, gray-haired poacher himself.

As he stood, grinding his teeth in angry indecision, he heard, not at the end of the island but beyond it near the center of the bay, the abrupt *put-putting* roar of a speed boat suddenly putting its motor to work. The sound grew to a steady roar and gradually drew away.

It sounded as if Fagot might have rowed quietly to the middle of the bay,

and then, feeling safe from shots if he were heard, had spun the motor. And thinking this, a new fear came into Tony's heart.

If Elinor had started to row across the bay when he had asked her to, it was possible that she had not reached the other side. If she hadn't, she would be visible in the growing light on the water, and Fagot, if he should want to, could overtake her.

The excitement of the attack on the house had almost driven Elinor out of his mind. Now, the thought of her alone on the bay with Fagot and his crew near by, made him suddenly frantic. He ran for the end of the island, dodging damp branches and grappling undergrowth, slipping on the wet pine needles. He wanted to make sure, first of all, that she had taken the rowboat, and secondly, that she was not in sight on the water.

Reaching the end of the island he looked across the dark expanse of water. Far off he could see the white trail of the motor boat, whose roar now had become considerably diminished by distance. There was no black spot which would signify the presence of another boat; none, at any rate, that he could spy.

Dodging the wet branches of the bushes along the shore, he hurried to where the speed boat had been lying near the bank. If the rowboat was gone, he would know that Elinor had made her way safely across to the mainland.

He stopped, with a curse that was half a prayer.

The rowboat, the one Elinor was to have taken, the only one that there had been for her to take, was lying exactly where it had been lying when he and Jim and Graves had started out to attack the house. The speed boat, however, was gone. The Fagot crowd had come back to their boat, slipping up silently before Elinor had cast off. She

must be on that speed boat, he thought, and turned his eyes, straining them along the white wake which by now had shot away so far that the sight could no longer follow it.

There was a chance that she was still on the island.

"Elinor!" he shouted. "Elinor, this is Tony! Elinor!"

There was no answer except the echo.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SILENCE.

ELINOR!" Tony shouted again.

The sound raced across the choppy salt water of the bay and floated back again, saying the word in another accent. A huge osprey, startled from his nest, broke out from the pines; his six-foot spread of wing was visible for an instant as he shot by, to circle the point and vanish. A rabbit scurried away in the darkness. There was no other answer.

For a moment, Tony thought of pushing off in the rowboat and starting after the lost speed boat, but as he heard its roar circling through the maze of some inlet down the bay he realized how futile it was to try to follow its thirty-mile speed in a rowboat which he could urge to only four or five.

"Perhaps she's still on the island," he thought, his hope creating the idea, and he began to rush back along the way he had come. He changed his course next, and crossed to come back along the other side. Occasionally he paused and called to her, startling the birds in the bushes.

His imagination suggested that she might have been hit by a stray bullet; might be lying bleeding to death with her head in a puddle. He began frantically quartering the island, working across and back and moving southward toward the house. The light was becoming more pronounced as the clouds broke up, and he could see objects, as

shadowy bulks, some distance away. He was only a score of yards from the house when he came stock-still with a sharp intake of breath.

Something was lying across the flagged walk near the house. He ran toward it, praying. When he came nearer he saw that it was a human figure. He switched on the flash light and in the circle of radiance discovered the quiet figure of Denby Fagot. The maroon sweater, the old trousers, the brassy hair covered partly by the knitted hat, lay there like the properties of a rag man.

He switched off the light quickly and hurried past. Like a reminder out of the great unknown, this figure had conveyed to him more forcibly than ever what might have happened to Elinor. And the silence was like a heavy hand, pressing down upon the lonely island, the deserted, choppy bay, the dark, empty house. A damp finger seemed to touch his cheek; he started, with an exclamation. It had been only a leaf, he saw, but it left him chilled. It suggested that almost anything might come out of this grim silence and darkness. He had an impulse to go into the house, lock all the doors and turn on all the lights.

Instead, he went softly in the darkness down to the rose garden. He wanted to look once more at that shallow excavation. He remembered exactly how it had looked. The tar-covered canvas must have had a container around it, to judge by the impression of an oblong object, perhaps a foot square, which the mold still had retained. The tar-covered canvas was not quite of that shape, so as he neared the sundial he flashed on his light. To his surprise, he was rewarded almost at once.

On the ground, where it had been discarded, he found a flat cedar box, such as might have been used as a humidifier for a small quantity of high-class

cigars. It was rotted and soggy with age, in spite of being made of cedar, and on its inside remained pieces of tar, showing that it had contained the tar-covered canvas buried by Anthony Bruce, the old recluse with the secret source of income.

Tony, casting the light around to look for the canvas which he had thrown down in his earlier excitement, held it still with an exclamation.

The excavation was not as he had left it. The impression of the cedar box, only a foot or two beneath the surface of the sundial's base, had been removed with the additional foot or two of excavation which had been made within the last quarter of an hour. The hole was twice as deep now.

Not only that; something else had been taken out of it. As he knelt and looked closer, Bruce could see plainly that an oblong object, like a box or container, about five inches wide and eighteen inches long, had been pulled up out of the niche which it had occupied. He could see even the finger marks, where some one had forced his knuckles into the sandy soil at the side of the container in order to get a grip underneath it. It had made a smooth smear where it had been pulled up at one end of its niche; at the other end were scattered lumps of mold.

While he was kneeling, he thought he heard a sound, as of a stumbling footstep, toward the southern end of the island. He got softly to his feet and listened.

He could hear nothing now except a new sound, an ominous, steady sound which was like a threat. The speed boat, although still far away, was coming nearer. He could hear the roar growing ever louder across the water. He wondered if Fagot could have left for reinforcements. Or perhaps he had left because he had thought Bruce's attack on the house had meant the arrival of the sheriff. In either case, they were

returning; or it might be they were coming back to see if they had been mistaken, in which case they would circle the island looking for the sheriff's boat.

While he stood there thinking, he heard again a sound from the bridge end of the island; the end, rather, where the bridge had been and where Hardy Graves had stalled his car while trying to turn in the narrow road.

He had put out the flash light. Holding it in his left hand, the automatic in his right, he started quietly toward the sound. It had been a sound he could not explain, merely an interruption of the silence rather than a definite clew to what might be going forward. But as he walked through the rose garden, crossed the grass to the entrance gate, went through and began walking softly down the road, he came to a definite conclusion.

Some one had dug down under the sundial within the last quarter of an hour and had removed a heretofore undiscovered oblong object, an object that might well answer the description of the "tin container" mentioned in old Anthony Bruce's will. Tony thought it probable, moreover, that this person, and no other, was responsible for the sounds that he just had heard.

If the person had a boat, he might have been pushing off; the sound might have been the dropping of the oars in the oarlocks, of the pushing off of the boat from the shore.

He began to walk faster. The road was quite narrow and circuitous, however, and though he rode over it every day he did not know its peculiarities well enough to run along it in the dark—not if he wanted to steal up on some one by surprise. His progress therefore was slow. On his right lay the smooth, sheltered water of a protected inlet. On his left, perhaps twenty feet away, the windward water slapped with small sounds restlessly against the shore. Ahead he could see only the

continuous curve of the road. But he began to come now to the final curve.

He turned it cautiously, coming from behind the cedar at the side of the road and peering ahead. The trees were low and sparse where the road met the bridge. Just this side of the newly made gap, where the explosion had gulped the bridge, he could see plainly the dark bulk of Hardy Graves' new sporty roadster. It glimmered faintly in two places, one of which was a nick-eled headlight rim, the other he couldn't identify.

As he stood watching, he heard a new sound. This one was unmistakable: the clink of metal on metal.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TIN CONTAINER.

THE sound undoubtedly came from just beyond or behind the roadster, which stood across the road, its rear wheels, no doubt, sunk in the soft sand which Graves had backed into when he had tried to turn back to the house after finding the bridge had been blown up.

As Tony Graves was about to move stealthily forward upon the roadster, he was startled to hear, right beside his head, a choking cry, as if some one had been strangled in the midst of a question. He turned his head and was transfixed to see two large luminous orbs, of a greenish-yellow, staring into his own. He was frozen for a second with horror; then he recognized the pale, shield-like face of an owl, which was ruffling out its tiger-colored plumage in the dimness; and as he watched, it took to flight, on almost soundless wings, avoiding the twigs and branches in its path, and circling out over the road and then wheeling back into the trees, where he lost sight of it.

A figure stepped out from behind the roadster, as if it had heard this sound and were seeking an explanation for it. There could be only one person so tall

and with such compact shoulders supporting the narrow head. Against the background of the water, Bruce could see even the outline of the thin shanks in golf stockings.

"Graves!" he called softly.

The figure started visibly.

"Tony?" it replied after a moment of silence. "Is that you?" Graves, too, spoke in a low tone.

Tony Bruce walked down to the roadster. Graves had disappeared again behind it, and as Bruce came up he found the lawyer tugging and panting, trying to unscrew the spare tire from its rack behind the car.

"Where is Elinor?" Tony demanded.

"How the hell do I know?" Graves replied with irritable excitement. "How do you get this damn tire off?"

"What became of you when Jim and I were ahead of you back there?" Bruce demanded more insistently. The recent excavation of the oblong container, coupled with the shot that had been fired at him from behind when he had been with Jim, renewed his suspicions of the lawyer.

"Why, you damn fool, you think I was going to stay there and be shot at like that from behind?" Graves panted between tugs at the recalcitrant tire. "Help me here, will you? I'm going to use this to swim across the bay with, or the inner tube if I can get it out. I'm not going to stay on this damned island another second if I can help it."

"But what became of you?" Bruce insisted tensely.

"Why, I ran!" Graves replied angrily. "I went back to the end of the island, or near it. But a man had come to join the dwarf on the speed boat and I heard others slipping up to the boat from the house. So I sneaked back, looking for our rowboat, but it was gone. I thought you had gone off in it."

"Jim took it," said Tony Bruce. "What did you do then?"

"Hell! I hid, of course!" snapped

Graves. "I was in the bushes when they came by carrying Fagot to the speed boat."

"What! Was Fagot shot?"

"Why else would they have quit?" asked Graves testily. "Are you going to help with this, or not?"

"Was he hurt badly?"

"How the hell do I know?"

"Elinor's rowboat is still up there, Graves," said Tony. "She may still be on the island. You and I have got to find her. We can take this tire off later."

"Later, hell!" cried Graves excitedly. "Haven't you heard that motor boat coming back?"

"That doesn't matter," said Bruce firmly. "Say, what's this on the ground?"

He had stepped on something oblong and hard. He switched on his flash light.

"Don't light that!" cried Graves, and snatched at it. Bruce kept it, however, and backing away, shone its beam upon a tar-covered box or container, crusted with fresh earth, which lay in the road. It was about five inches wide, about eighteen inches long, and about four inches thick. It was wrapped around the middle, both ways, with tarred twine, a long loop of which curled beside it.

"Where did that come from?" asked Tony. He suspected very definitely where it had come from, but to lull the other's alarm he spoke as if casually. And as he spoke, he leaned to examine the box more carefully.

His knee had hardly touched the ground when, like an explosion of fireworks, he saw a thousand varicolored stars. At the same instant he fell forward from the impact of the unexpected blow behind his ear; his face made a groove in the wet sand of the road, while the flash light rolled eerily away on one side, his automatic falling into the darkness on the other. He lay on

his face and chest for perhaps a few seconds, although to him it seemed for ages.

He felt the vicious kicks of the golf shoes against his leg, his chest; but he was as if in a nightmare, and couldn't move. The agony of a third kick, however, roused him; he rolled aside just in time to avoid the heel descending toward his face. And this one movement, like a signal, seemed to rally and co-ordinate all of his scattered faculties. In another movement he was on his feet.

He was up, but still somewhat groggy. His fist, swinging at Graves' face, missed by inches; while Graves' blow struck him on the cheek and sent him staggering against the side of the automobile. In an instant, Graves was upon him, hammering with his fists at the bent head; but Bruce, his mind clearing, worked around to where, with a jerk, he threw the frenzied lawyer aside and scrambled to his feet to meet him.

Hardy Graves was stooping to retrieve the iron wrench which must have slipped from his hand when he had struck at Bruce the first time. Bruce lifted a foot and, placing it against the lawyer's cap, shoved him backward to the ground. Then he picked up the wrench himself and threw it into the shrubbery.

"Get up, you cowardly dog!" he commanded, wiping a trickle of blood from his cheek. "Get up, and take a licking. You've got it coming to you for more things than one. Get up!"

But Graves remained motionless in the position of rising. The moon finally had broken through the heaviest clouds; its light, filtered through the gauze of mist in the opening overhead, threw a grayish radiance over the tall lawyer as he rested on one knee and one hand, his open mouth a dark aperture, his eyes shaded by the peaked cap, a point of light on his nose and chin.

"Get up!" Tony Bruce repeated, and stepped forward.

But Hardy Graves lifted his free hand.

"Listen, Tony!" he pleaded. "Listen!" he cried excitedly, and jumped up. "They're right here: Don't you hear 'em? They're coming back; coming right here where they've seen that damned light of yours. Damn your soul—I told you not to light it!"

"You are just thinking about your dirty skin," said Bruce, breathing hard from his exertions and from the anger boiling over inside of him. "You wouldn't help me search for Elinor, and God knows what's become of her. You shot at me from behind—you tried to steal the red box. I believe you've just stolen that box on the road there, and on top of that you tried to brain me from behind. Now, damn you, I'm going to give you the worst licking you ever got in your life—I don't give a damn who is coming!"

"Wait, Bruce! Wait, Tony!"

Hardy Graves backed away from the coldly furious Bruce, ran sidewise toward the rear of the car, his narrow face pale and drawn in the moonlight, his mouth open in a strained grimace of protest. There was a kind of frenzy behind his objections to Bruce's attack as if he thought the young engineer were being outrageously unreasonable.

"Wait, you fool! Can't you see they're coming back? Don't you know what Isaac Fagot will do to us if he finds I've double-crossed him? Haven't you got any sense?"

His voice rose to almost a shriek as Tony Bruce rushed at him. Graves struck out at the engineer with hands and feet; but Tony side-stepped them and swung his fist in a hard right-hand swing to the side of the lawyer's mouth. He experienced an unholy joy at feeling his knuckles crash against that complaining grimace, and swung again, knocking the tall lawyer crashing side-

wise and headlong into the car's rear fender.

Bruce's rush had taken him past the car, so that he was facing toward the vanished bridge. He felt a savage pleasure in seeing Graves climbing to his feet in the same staggering manner that he himself had just been recovering from. Here was the man, he thought, whom Elinor thought so much of, yet who hadn't had the ordinary decency to wait for her when she was expected to arrive by airplane at the beleaguered house; who had stolen the red box when he had fled, displaying that even his cowardice was not as great as his greed; and who, like a rat, when he was cornered thought more of fleeing than of fight. Just a living body of selfishness and greed, that's what he was.

"And now you're going to get that licking!" he told the lawyer when he struggled up, covered with sand. "Put up your hands, damn you!"

But instead Graves pointed. His pale eyes were wide with horror, his mouth in the long face was open but unable to speak. He swallowed, but so dryly that his throat made a clicking sound.

Suddenly, like a rabbit dodging a fox, he stooped. Before Bruce realized what he intended, he had picked up the oblong, tar-covered box from the sandy road. He strung its loop of string over his head even as he turned. And the next second his long legs in the golf stockings were flying down the road, heading for the bridge that was no longer there.

With an angry shout, Bruce followed. The lawyer kept going. Where the road plunged into the slapping waters of the windy bay, the lawyer kept on. He went into the bay with a splash, the water flying around him. As it got deeper, he was forced to go slower; but he continued to push forward until the water reached his hips, then his

waist. Before it had reached his shoulders, he dived straight ahead and began to swim, his feet in the golf shoes kicking above the surface, his golf cap making a gray spot on the water, while the oblong box glistened blackly over his submerged back.

Tony Bruce threw off his coat and was impulsively stepping into the water to follow when a shot, two shots, thundered out of the night behind him. One of the bullets ricocheted from the water and went off across the bay singing its small, venomous song.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A THREE-CORNERED AFFAIR.

TONY whirled around, too late to see whence the shots had come, and instinctively ran crouching from the water's edge toward the left, so that the bulk of the automobile interposed itself between him and the water on the other side of the narrow end of the island.

Kneeling there, straining his eyes and his ears, no weapon in his hands, he became for a moment overcome again with the feeling that some inevitable decree of Fate, some evil descended from his roistering old grandfather, was to wreak its will upon him. The new sand-colored roadster glimmered dimly in the filtered moonlight. Beside it the flash light sprayed its distorted beam along the road in Tony's direction, so that the ground behind it was black and invisible and he could not see where the automatic had fallen.

Beyond the car, on either side of it, stood the scraggy cedars and stunted pines at the water's edge, the smooth, sheltered inlet behind them gleaming like a foggy plate of steel while to the right of the car, and beyond it along the narrow road, the moon's dim light made a strange and mysterious hodgepodge of greenish shape and gargoyle shadow. To Tony Bruce's imagination it seemed for a moment as if the very

earth itself had become alive with evil intent and was stretching and twisting its features in grimaces of devilish enjoyment.

He recalled the still body of Denby Fagot, lying damp upon the flagged walk. He remembered the telephone message that had been sent to the sheriff. Isaac Fagot, it seemed, must have intended that he, Bruce, be blamed for Denby Fagot's death. And it accorded with Isaac Fagot's cold character to have it planned now that no witnesses in rebuttal of this blame should be allowed to leave the island.

Bruce realized this to be a fantastic thought on his part; but it was even less fantastic than the things which had actually occurred. If true, it meant that Elinor Chase had been taken in hand by this man. How else could he explain her absence, her refusal to reply to his shouts? And now that Fagot had found himself recognized; had realized that his attack upon the island would lay him under charges of murderous assault as well as forcible entry—now he would have the recklessness of desperation to justify what he wished to do.

The thought of Elinor in this man's hands caused a cold rage to rise in Tony's heart. He discarded the fleeting idea of diving overboard and swimming the bay to safety. He didn't know that she had been taken by Fagot, but the very thought that Fagot doubtless intended it made his eyes film with red. He crept farther sidewise behind the screen of bushes which had sheltered him. When the car screened him fully from the flash light, he came out and ran toward the car. Reaching it, rising quietly behind it with a hand on the canvas-covered rear tire to steady himself, he peered past the flash light's flat beam and saw his automatic lying, a dark spot, beside the road.

At the same time, he heard distinct movements toward the front of the car;

several men were coming up from the shore toward the road, and though they moved softly, their boots made a rustle in the grass.

Tony Bruce moved out from behind the car, stepped over the flash light and jumped for the automatic. He did it all in one movement, and this, no doubt, is why he collided with the man who had been creeping along the side of the car toward the rear and the fallen light.

The man sprang backward with a choked curse and fired his revolver, twice, missing each time because Tony had been going past him for the automatic; or because of his fright. At the same time the man ran around the front of the car, making ready to fire from behind its shelter, and Tony, while the man did this, jumped back behind the car's rear.

He had the gun, but now he had been discovered; that is, they knew now exactly where he was, and he no longer had the advantage of being able to move about in the shelter and obscurity of the bushes.

Tony laughed without mirth and without sound, grimly. He was alone against them all, and he had nothing to lose. Hardy Graves was crossing the bay with the mysterious legacy from his grandfather. Elinor either was hidden on the island, had gone off safely in a boat—maybe with Jim—or had fallen into Fagot's hands. He, Tony Bruce, was receiving now the inheritance from his grandfather—the evil which the old man's evil living was to hand down even unto the third generation.

He was to die at the hands of the old man's other grandson, who in turn would, no doubt, soon or late, come to no good end himself. And he, Tony Bruce, was dying, as his rough-and-ready old grandfather might have died, with a grim laugh on his lips.

He remembered now the tales that had been told him of the old man on the quarter-deck defying and defeat-

ing the mutinous sailors on his vessel, when they were threatening him with death. In this one instant Tony Bruce realized how it is true that blood is thicker than water and for the first time in his life began to see how truly he and his old sea-captain grandfather were kin.

He decided that he would let the enemy know they had been in a fight; and if he could, he would get his hands on Isaac Fagot. There would be some satisfaction in dying if he could first sink his thumbs in that man's throat.

Bruce left the flash light lying on the ground and crept along the shadowy side of the car toward its front. It sat crosswise of the road, but with its rear more toward the blown-out bridge than toward the side. The moonlight, such as there was, was on the front and other side of the car, and this man of Fagot's, as well as some of Fagot's other men, were in the darkness in front of the car, where a tall pine threw a shadow.

Bruce had conceived the idea of turning on the car's lights so as to reveal the hidden men to his fire.

The left-hand front door was hanging open, just as Graves had left it, which made for Tony a further shield. Moving softly over the sandy road, Tony made the front of the car, climbed on the running board, leaned inside and turned the headlight switch.

Instantaneously the ground in front of the car was flooded with light. The humped backs of three men were shown, and their startled eyeballs before they ducked. Only one of them did not duck, but instead rose up to his stocky height, his hair and face shining whitely in the glare, while the whole side of his granitelike head was red with blood.

It was Isaac Fagot. His cold, deep-set eyes, his chiseled mouth, were set with such intensity of rage that Tony remembered, in a flash that went as

soon as it came, the expression the man had worn when he had seen his brother, Denby, fighting in Tony's office. But Tony had no time for recollection. Fagot's huge hairy fist rose and pointed a thing that gleamed. It flashed and roared, and the glass of the wind shield spit glass and showed a tiny hole. Only then did Tony realize that the dashboard light had revealed him to Fagot at the same time the headlights had revealed Fagot to him.

Bruce jumped out of the car's door, to avoid firing through the wind shield, and as he landed fired at Fagot. His balance was precarious and his shot went wild. The next one he aimed more carefully; Fagot, a little confused by the bright lights, was running toward him, and Bruce had a near view and a target that couldn't be missed. He pulled the trigger.

His automatic merely clicked. He pulled the trigger again. The same thing happened. He had used up his shells while fighting around the house.

Fagot was rushing nearer, his teeth shining in a savage grin, for in that instant of time he had located Bruce and had recognized the condition of the young engineer's revolver. Fagot was raising his gun when Tony Bruce, with the speed of thought, leaped backward, behind the car's open door, which received Fagot's swinging shot. The next second Bruce sped to the rear of the car and stood sheltered behind it, as he had been before.

Fagot was plunging toward him with the smoking pistol. He could not see him, but he could hear him, could hear even the man's breathing. A thousand thoughts passed through Bruce's mind. On his right, toward the big bulk of the log-built house, nearly visible through the trees, was the darkness of the small copse of pine trees. He could dash into that and, even if pursued, dodge his pursuers about the island for hours; maybe till daylight, or after,

when the sheriff would doubtless be coming down to the island to interview him as an official duty on the report of Denby Fagot's death. Or maybe he would be able to get a chance to slip to the shore and swim across the bay. If the moon should go in again, this would be easy. Or, from the other side of the island, he might be able to swim as far as some reedy inlet, where he could lie hidden even in daylight.

These thoughts took but an instant. The instinct of self-preservation is strong in a man, and Tony Bruce's desire to die was not strengthened by the sudden volley of shots which now came out of the woods into which he had been thinking of dashing. The bullets plopped into the metal of the car's body, or passed through from window to window, making a mean and vicious *crack-crack* which was so quick that only his subconscious mind distinguished the two sounds from one. His chance now, he realized, was to dash back into the shrubbery by the shore, out of which he had just come, and circle around the woods in its shelter.

He was startled by an abrupt crescendo of revolver and rifle shots, had just turned to dash into the shrubbery behind him, when above the sound of firing and of men's sudden curses he heard Elinor's voice. It was pitched in an excited scream.

"Tony!" she screamed. "*Tony!*"

It came from toward the front of the car and perhaps fifty feet beyond it. At the thought of Elinor in Isaac Fagot's hands, at the sound of her voice, Tony Bruce went blind with a ruddy fury. Turning the automatic in his hand he ran out from behind the car and toward its front.

Something had stopped Isaac Fagot's rush. He had turned back in the direction from which the scream had come. But out of the side of his eye he caught sight of Tony Bruce, and wheeled to meet him, while Bruce, lifting the

clubbed automatic, raced toward that granitelike, evil countenance, that massive figure, with a feeling of wild rage, the satisfaction of which was almost a pleasure.

Fagot fired. The bullet burned the skin from Bruce's left ribs; the flame burned his coat, as he brought down the gun's butt against that low, slanting forehead, between Fagot's coldly glaring, deep-set eyes. Fagot sank a step backward like a clubbed bullock; but his enormous strength was scarcely diminished, he lunged forward again, his massive chest bared like a bear's as his cordlike arms reached for his young antagonist. Bruce brought up the gun again and brought it down on Fagot's charging head. But the blow was slanting. Fagot struck against him, caught him in a bearlike grip.

Bruce's right arm was caught against Fagot's side by that grasp. His left arm was free above Fagot's shoulder. Bringing it around the bull-like neck, he tried to hook his fingers in the brute's Adam's apple. But the iron neck muscles came forward so strongly that it was like trying to throttle a bronze statue. He tried to keep his feet as Fagot swung him viciously around against the car, but it was like trying to resist some force of nature.

In a last gasp of primitive rage, he tried to force his head down, past Fagot's face, so he might fasten his teeth in the man's throat. Instead, as his face came down, he felt the teeth of Fagot piercing his ear. The two grandsons were in this embrace when a gun roared and Bruce knew nothing more.

CHAPTER XIX.

A COMPARISON OF NOTES.

TONY awakened at length to a sense of sharp pain; a throbbing, excruciating, knifelike thrust which went through his head at each beat of his pulse. At first he had no recollection

of what had occurred. He was aware merely of lying on something soft and of feeling that his left hand was held between two soft warm hands. He groaned a little, and felt something soft and warm touch his forehead.

He opened his eyes. The bright light made his head split, and he closed them again. Then the bright light reminded him of something important. What was it? He opened his eyes and looked around.

At his right ran a row of familiar windows, with curtains hanging before them. The ceiling over his head, beamed with juniper logs, was the ceiling of his own living room. Some one was walking up and down the room. At the risk of breaking his head in two, Tony turned his eyes just enough to glimpse the gray head and stooped shoulders of Mr. Parks, the justice of the peace. What could Mr. Parks be doing in his living room, walking up and down with a rifle across his arm? The old codger had on a coonskin cap, despite the warm weather; and his sunken jaws, kept as ruddy as his nose by his habit of liquor indulgence, were working rapidly on a chew of tobacco. He would go to the fireplace, spit with a brief, dry sound, then return and peer out of the open front door.

Tony closed his eyes and tried to think. When he opened them again they rested idly upon the high windows which ran along the western side of the living room. One of the panes of one of these windows was smashed. How did that happen? Some one had knocked it out—with a pistol barrel, he remembered dimly. Some girl. A brave girl. Ah!

"Elinor!" he cried.

He swung his feet down from the settee beneath the front windows and tried to rise. Some one was trying to stop him. Was it Fagot? He remembered everything now and wrenched himself furiously around till he was sit-

ting upright with his head spinning so dizzily that the room went whirling. He held onto the sides of the settee till the floor stopped dipping and the walls of the room stopped flying past. Then he realized that some one was holding him gently by each arm and that he was staring into the deep-brown eyes of a girl with wind-blown chestnut hair. Her face was pale and worried. But what interested him most was the expression with which she was staring at him. There was more than worry in it; there was something else. He thought he must still be dreaming.

"Elinor?" he asked with his eyes closed.

"Yes, Tony. Lie down, dear, please."

She had called him "dear." Now he knew he was dreaming.

"Then you are safe?" he asked. Even if it was a dream he might as well ask a few questions. "You got away?"

"The sheriff came, dear. I went to meet him. Won't you lie down, for me? Please do, Tony."

"And Graves?" asked Tony Bruce, trying to remember.

"I don't know where Hardy is," replied Elinor's soft voice. "I haven't seen him since I watched him dig up the box."

Tony Bruce's eyes and mouth both flew open.

"What's that?" he inquired.

"Yes, Tony. When you and Jim and Hardy went off in the boat, I followed along the shore. But I went too far; I passed by the place where you all landed, as I afterward discovered. I was near Fagot and his men so I hid in the little house out by the garage—the one with the gasoline engine in it."

"You couldn't see the sundial from there," said Tony.

"No. I was in there when Fagot and one of his men were talking. It was after you and they had been exchanging shots. Fagot told his man that it was

you out there by yourself doing all that shooting. He told him to have the men surround you. That's why I shot him." He felt her shudder.

"Shot who?" demanded Bruce, feeling giddy again.

"Fagot. After the man had gone away, I shot Fagot in the head. Presently the man came running back, and when he found Fagot lying there he went off and got somebody else and they carried Fagot away. There was no more shooting after that. I waited a while and came out looking for you—I mean, after I heard their boat start off."

"But then—let me see—I was up the other end of the island. But I yelled for you. Didn't you hear me?"

"Yes. But I had just then gone down the other way, searching for you, and had seen Hardy digging in the rose garden. I didn't want him to know I was watching, so I didn't answer you. Then I heard that boat, the speed boat, coming back. I had started running back up the island, looking for you, when I saw two rowboats coming across the bay. I thought they would be Jacky, who flew me down to the beach, you know; or some friends of yours. It turned out to be the sheriff. I told him to keep quiet and follow me across the island, so as to meet the speed boat, which was heading back to that side. Before we got there, we heard shots."

"You and I must have just missed each other in the dark," said Tony Bruce, "because I think I got back to the rose garden just after Graves had been there."

He lifted his hands to his aching head, trying to think, and found it bandaged. At the same time he noticed that Elinor's coat was off and that one of her sleeves had been torn off at the shoulder. The old justice of the peace came shuffling up.

"Well, did they get Fagot?" asked Bruce.

"Naw," said the old man, eying Elinor appreciatively. In fact, he seemed to be trying to win her attention. "Not yet, nohow, though the sheriff's got men after him, and we've got his speed boat. He was trying to put his brother's death onto you, Mr. Bruce. Called up the sheriff, or got somebody to do it, and said you'd done it; then brought the body over here and laid it at your door. But, *he! he!* you can't git ahead of the womenfolks."

"How is that?"

"Why, his woman, Denby Fagot's woman, come over and told the sheriff all of it. That's why we all come over, two boatloads of us, sworn in as depitties. She told the sheriff old Isaac Fagot had done had a quar'l with his brother about some money. Seems like Isaac give him ten thousand dollars to buy some propitty with and Denby lost the money, or something. Said he had left it at your office, but Isaac believed he had lost it in a drinking and gambling spree, so Isaac got to fighting him, and shot him."

"But, why did he want to put it on Tony?" asked the girl.

"Now that's something," said the old fellow, "you got to ask somebody else. They do say it was because Mr. Bruce and Denby Fagot had been seen fighting, which would kind of give the appearance of a motive to the crime. But, more than that, the woman had a story about a red box, and about a lot of buried jewels or gold or something which old Isaac wanted to git away from Mr. Bruce here. Now, I ain't even telling you that, because as you both can see, it's jest too far-fetched for anybody to set any store by. Jest one of these here women's yarns, that's all."

"But I thought you said you shot Fagot," Tony Bruce said to Elinor Chase, who was still kneeling beside him. "If you shot him, what was he doing back here?"

"He come to, and made 'em bring him back," explained the justice of the peace. "That there hunchback said that's how it happened. And he said that—— What was that?"

The old fellow, holding his rifle ready, went out of the front door at the sound of shots toward the other side of the island.

"I'm not hurt much," Tony Bruce insisted, when Elinor tried to keep him from rising. "Let me see if these legs will work."

He got up and walked across the room, although she went along, holding his arm as if he had been a child. His headache had begun to get better. Apparently the shot which had hit his skull behind the ear hadn't gone deep, had just grazed him; and the wound in his side had not even needed a bandage. The shirt was stuck to it, but it had stopped bleeding.

His mind began to clear, too. He began to feel a rush of relief and almost exultation that Elinor was safe. Nothing else mattered; not even the flight of Graves with the tin container. As he looked at her out of the side of his eyes, however, and as she smiled up at him, he couldn't bring himself yet to believe that she was fond enough of him to justify him in asking her to share his lot, which was poverty compared to the things she had been used to; nor could he disabuse his mind of the fact that she had given every indication of being fond of Hardy Graves.

"Elinor," he said, "why did you follow us along the shore when Graves and Jim and I were in the boat? You were afraid Graves would be hurt, weren't you? Be honest!"

She laughed, her old mischievous laugh.

"Well, you shouldn't have done it," he said hotly. "You promised me you would take the boat, and it wasn't fair to me to expose yourself to danger on my place when the cause of it all was

the enmity this fellow Fagot had for me."

"It wasn't for Hardy Graves that I went along, Tony," she said reproachfully. "Or, at least, not for the reason you think. I saw something in his face."

"Saw what in his face?"

"I know him pretty well, Tony. I know he was—well, jealous of you. I was afraid of what Hardy might do. That's why I followed you along the shore."

The justice of the peace shouted in from the front door.

"Come on, you two! Fagot's shot pretty bad this time. The sheriff says he's got to be taken over to a doctor quick. We'll put him and the other Fagot in the same boat. You two cooing doves can go in the other one. Come on, now!"

"I don't like you to go way across the bay just now," said Elinor, raising her dark eyes to Tony's gray ones. "I can take care of you here, Tony."

"We can't stay here," said Tony. "They can find us some kind of automobile on the other side, and I can take you to the club or to a hotel at Virginia Beach, where you'll be comfortable. I'll put up at the club."

They went out of the front door, across the paved porch and down the flagged walk toward the canoe landing where, in the moonlight, they could see the sheriff's men loading two figures into one of the rowboats beached there. From far across the bay had risen a quacking from the tame ducks, roused from their slumbers. The moon, bright on the water, made black silhouettes of the figures on the shore.

"What are they shouting about now?"

There had been a shout, but now the men had left the boat to group themselves around something in the water. One man had waded out and was reaching for a dark object whose outlines

they would not discern. He pulled it to shore, creating a whirlpool of silver ripples. The men stood around it. A hush had fallen over them. In the silence the quacking of the ducks came more distinctly than ever across the moonlit water.

CHAPTER XX.

THROWN UP BY THE BAY.

"COME on," said Elinor, "let's see what it is."

"No," said Tony, "you wait here while I go down."

He had an uncomfortable presentiment that it might be something she was better off not seeing, and he started down the slope, but she ran up to him and caught his arm.

"I don't want you to go walking around alone yet," she told him, "and I'm going with you."

The men's figures, dark in the moonlight, were grouped around the object which they had drawn up on the shore. As Tony and Elinor came nearer they could see that one man was lifting and lowering a long, limp body, while another man, on his knees, held the sagging head. Water dripped, and the sound of soggy clothing dragging on the ground was mournful and weird. When the standing man laid his burden down, the kneeling one leaped upon it. He seized the arms and pushed them far out along the ground above the body's head. He drew them back, and folded them, pressing the elbows against the body's ribs. Then he pushed them out again.

All the while, his own breathing, loud from his exertions, seemed to be trying to exhort the other man to breathe also. The moon gilded the recumbent figure's eyeballs and made a little silver moon where a film of water lay on his vest. The other men stood in a devout silence as if watching some immemorial rite. They were motionless, as if they had

become a part of the motionless earth. Then something groaned.

"He's comin' round!" shouted one of the watchers.

The kneeling man, astride of the recumbent figure, redoubled the vigor of his efforts. The watchers crowded closer; some of them knelt, as if to lend the aid of their good will by leaning nearer. The figure was groaning regularly now, a faint sound with a rattle in its throat. But the men by its side seemed pleased. They turned to each other and nodded their heads. They smiled. And the figure's breathing grew easier.

"He's all right now," said the kneeling man, and jumped up, rubbing his horny palms together. "Come now; give a lift."

Willing hands picked up the long, inert, but breathing frame clothed in the gray suit and swung it toward the rowboat. Its thin legs in golf stockings sagged until a final man supported them over the stern. The figure was stowed in the bow and an oarsman stood up, roaring:

"All aboard! We got to get this man to a doctor."

"Oh, he's all right now," said another.

Tony, who had been watching the whole proceedings breathlessly, felt a tug at his sleeve. He turned to find Mr. Parks, the justice of the peace and at present a deputy sheriff, holding up an oblong object which dripped and glittered.

"This here," said Mr. Parks, turning his head aside momentarily to spit, "was hung around his neck by this here cord. Was this here the box you-all was talking about?"

"Good gosh!" exclaimed Tony Bruce, "it certainly——"

But the end of his sentence was interrupted by the stentorian voice of the sheriff. He was a big man in a white shirt, black trousers, and a panama hat.

"All right," he was shouting, "all right!" He waved a long arm toward the boat on the beach. "My boat is loaded and I'm pulling out right now. I got to get Isaac Fagot to a doctor. All right! Pile in your boat now. Go on!"

He turned and went running back to the other rowboat, which promptly pushed off. Oars were dropped into oarlocks; with a rhythmical splashing, making a glitter of circling ripples on each side of the boat, she swam into the bay.

"Come on," said Tony.

Elinor took two steps toward the boat. Then she stopped.

"I can't do it, Tony. I can't get in the boat with——"

"I know how you feel. It's unpleasant," said Tony. "But you can't stay here on the island with me alone."

"Why can't I?" she demanded.

"Because I won't stand for it," Tony answered.

They turned when a cracked voice beside them giggled. Mr. Parks, his coonskin cap on one side of his white head, his ruddy cheeks stretching and relaxing as he chewed briskly, was grinning at Elinor till his ruddy nose nearly touched his spade chin. He clutched his rifle by its middle.

"You-all could stay here if you was married," giggled the old man. "I could hitch you up right now and you could git the papers to-morrow. All I ast is to kiss the bride!"

"Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Parks," said Tony impatiently.

"Why?" inquired Elinor somewhat sharply. "Are you so much against it?"

"Why, no!" replied Tony Bruce, somewhat taken aback. "Just the opposite. But——"

"Then what's ridiculous about it?" asked Elinor.

They stood staring at each other, the girl with the dark eyes and unruly chestnut hair, standing in the moonlight

with her hands in the pockets of the flying-suit trousers, one arm torn out of her white shirt, and the moon making her mouth a curved shadow and her eyes pools of light. Tony, with a bloody bandage around his light-brown head, a smear of blood on his serious ruddy countenance, and sandy streaks all over his clothes, which on one side were stuck to his ribs with blood. His clear gray eyes were in shadow, but a light shone from them nonetheless.

The silence lasted for some minutes. It was broken by Elinor's soft but determined voice.

"Go ahead and marry us, Mr. Parks," she said.

Mr. Parks laid down his rifle, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"I might miss a few words," he began.

"If you do, I'll remind you of them," said Elinor. "I've been practicing up for this for some time."

Mr. Parks giggled and wiped his mouth.

"You can't git ahead of the ladies," said Mr. Parks.

"Yes," said Elinor, "Mr. Bruce has been evading me for some time. But you and I have got him now, Mr. Parks. Go ahead and marry us!"

"We got to have a witness," said Mr. Parks. He spat and then called over his shoulder: "Hey, Joe! Come here!"

A man came walking deliberately up from the boat, and when he came near Mr. Parks began.

"You stand there, Joe, and witness this here ceremony."

Elinor was slipping a ring from her finger.

"Take this, Tony," she said.

"Keep quiet in the courtroom," said Mr. Parks. "I mean, keep quiet. Now, what's your full name, young lady?"

Elinor told him. Bruce told him his.

"How is the man you pulled out of

the water?" Elinor interrupted, to inquire of the witness.

"He'll be all right," answered the man called Joe.

"All right, Mr. Parks," said the girl. "Excuse me."

"Anthony Bruce," asked the old justice of the peace, "do you take this woman to be your wedded wife?"

The light, gushing from the open house door, mingled with the moonlight on the grass and the pine tags at their feet. Overhead, the tall pines rustled their evergreen needles together, making a latticed canopy against the clearing sky. Beyond the bay the ducks were quacking; a leader duck was leading the way across the water, for his *quack-quack*, and the answering sallies from those in his train, were coming nearer. The big wing-spread of the great osprey appeared for a moment as he circled back toward the nest from which he had been disturbed. The boat bearing the wounded Fagot and his brother's body appeared as a dark object, now far out upon the moonlit water. Occasionally there was a flash as the moon's light struck the blade of an oar.

Tony was taking in all these things in a sort of wonder, as the cracked voice of the old man went through the ceremony. The most wonderful, the most unbelievable part of it all was what was happening at the moment, and his mind almost refused to accept it.

"I now pronounce you man and wife," said Mr. Parks, and at the same time the voices, which had been calling at times from the boat on the shore, grew to a chorus:

"Come on! What's the matter up there?"

Mr. Parks spat on the ground, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and moved toward Elinor.

"Now I gotta kiss the bride," he cackled.

But Tony intervened good-humor-

edly. "Not now," he said. "They're waiting for you, Mr. Parks. I'll see you at your office to-morrow, probably. Thanks a lot, and good night. Thank you, Joe."

Mr. Parks picked up his rifle. Joe, relieved to be over with his rather embarrassing duty, yet delighted to have had a part in it, hurried down to the boat. Mr. Parks rather grudgingly followed him. Not to be cheated, however, out of his romantic leanings, he turned, after he had gotten into the boat, and kissed his hand to Elinor.

Elinor kissed her hand to him.

"Good night!" her clear, sweet voice called to him.

And Joe must have been telling the men what had happened; for as they got a little farther out into the silver water, their oars flashing, their bow cutting a little splash of white, their rich voices came rolling back toward the young man and the girl, bearing to them the deep good wishes of a world that loves its lovers.

"Good night! Good night! Good night!" the men called.

Tony and Elinor waved and called back to them. Finally the boat became merged with the shadows of the opposite shore, the hum of voices talking in it became lost entirely in the distance. Tony and his wife awoke from the little trance which had fallen over them and each turned involuntarily toward the house.

It was only then that Tony remembered.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "We haven't even looked in the box!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TWO TREASURES.

THE tar-covered tin container, which Mr. Parks had removed from where it had hung around Hardy Graves' neck, was lying in the moonlight on the ground. Bruce stooped and

picked it up, groaning involuntarily at the sharp pain which the movement shot through his side. He turned it over in his hands.

"It isn't very heavy," said Tony, shaking his bandaged head. "There is no gold in it, or jewels. Well, I had the feeling this was all a wild-geese chase."

"Come on inside, quick!" cried Elinor, tugging at his arm excitedly. "Let's open it!" She was jumping up and down and clapping her hands together.

"All right," agreed Tony, laughing, "but don't expect too much. It's probably a lot of Confederate money. The old fellow was a captain in the Confederate navy, you know. Captain Anthony Bruce; he commanded a gunboat, which was sunk in Norfolk harbor in 1862."

"Hurry up!" Elinor insisted. "I can't stand this suspense."

They hurried into the living room. Elinor spread a newspaper on the mahogany center table, Tony got a screw driver and a hammer from the kitchen, and they started to work. First the tar, a quarter of an inch thick, had to be flaked off until they could find where the box was hinged. Next they discovered that the hasp was twined with wire, which had been fused by heat. After breaking this, and considerably denting the box in the process, Tony got his screw driver under the top and forced it up. The box had been sealed around with red sealing wax, then painted, then dipped in tar, so that the oilsilk which they saw inside was entirely dry, in spite of the recent immersion in water.

Tony lifted the oilsilk up and found it to be wrapped about the contents of the box, which came out as an oblong packet fitting snugly into the box's interior. The oilsilk, of a yellow-green hue, smelled strongly of linseed oil, and cracked as Tony began to unfold it.

Elinor was making little noises at his shoulder.

Inside the first layer of oilskin was another. On top of it lay a slip of paper, yellowed by age. Elinor snatched it up and opened it. Tony looked over her shoulder. It was inscribed with nervous characters, scrawled in ink of a reddish-purple which Bruce recognized as being similar to those in his grandfather's will.

"When Charleston fired on Fort Sumter," they both read aloud, "I foresaw the consequences and liquidated all of my property, afloat and ashore, while preparing to fight for my State." It was signed, "A. B."

"Oh, Lord! Confederate money!" groaned Tony.

"I don't know," replied Elinor. "You know the Confederacy hadn't been formed then."

Bruce was tearing open the inner oilskin packet, scattering the flakes of tar far and wide on the table in his haste. It was open at last, and revealed seven neat packets, each wrapped carefully in oilskin.

"Oh, good gracious!" cried Elinor impatiently.

Each seized a packet; each, after a feverish moment, cried aloud in astonished delight.

"They are greenbacks!" Tony shouted. "Good heavens alive! Let's count 'em."

They tore open the other packets. In each there were bills of a thousand dollars, five hundred dollars, and a hundred dollars—all of them guaranteed by the United States government. Tony's ruddy face glowed with excitement under the bandage tied around his light-brown hair. His gray eyes glistened and his hands trembled as he arranged the bills into piles of each denomination. He and Elinor began to count.

"A hundred of the hundred-dollar bills!" he shouted. "That's ten thousand dollars, Elinor!"

"And I've counted a hundred of the five-hundred dollar bills," said Elinor, staring at him with her dark eyes shining. "How much is that?"

"Let's see. That would be fifty thousand more. Sixty thousand in those two piles. Gosh, I'm almost scared to count this other one."

"Let me count half!" said Elinor.

During the following minute there was a great moistening of thumbs and rustling of currency.

"How many in yours?" asked Tony Bruce.

"Forty-six! And in yours?"

"Fifty-four. That means—a hundred thousand dollars more. A hundred and sixty thousand dollars altogether!"

They stared at each other in an ecstasy of unbelieving joy for a moment. Then they jumped up and joined hands and did an impromptu jig, from one end of the room to the other.

"Why, Tony!" cried Elinor, breathless, "it's a fortune!"

"A hundred and sixty thousand dollars!" repeated Bruce. "I just can't believe it. He was a shrewd old bird! He fought for his State, but he put all his property into Federal government money. No wonder Fagot——"

Tony paused. His gray eyes opened as his left hand went up and inside his coat. His mouth opened, too.

"What's the matter!" asked Elinor in alarm.

He removed his hand from his inside pocket, bringing to view a wet pack of green currency.

"It's the ten thousand dollars Denby Fagot left on my desk. He came into my office, drunk, and went off without it when we got into a scuffle. I'd forgotten all about it."

"Well, you can send it to his brother by the sheriff."

"No wonder Fagot wanted the island," continued Bruce as he flattened out the wet bills, "although, of course,

he didn't know what was hidden exactly. Or did he? But, anyhow, I can't understand one thing—I'll swear I can't."

"What is that?" asked Elinor.

"Why Hardy Graves tried to buy Heather Bay from me. Now what would he want with Heather Bay?"

"That's easy" replied Elinor, her white teeth showing. "He knew how much I loved it."

"You mean, he wanted it to use as a sort of bait to get you with?"

"Something like that!" Elinor admitted, and laughed suddenly.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I was just thinking of what Jacky Jones will say," she laughed, "when he finds his plane smashed—and me married!"

"I'm glad I've gotten you away from all these beaux," said Tony Bruce. "Now, look here! We've got to hide this money somewhere, until we can take it into town to the bank."

They bundled it together again, returned it to the tin box and, at Elinor's suggestion, stowed it in the back part of the refrigerator, behind the butter and the lettuce.

"Now," said Elinor, "your treasure is safe!"

"My treasure?" inquired Bruce. He stood under the light by the refrigerator, his ruddy face in shadow, and smiled down at the boyish figure of the girl, one of her sleeves torn out to bandage his head, her hands in the pockets

of the flying trousers, her chestnut hair gleaming in each of its short waves and her deep eyes meeting his frankly. "My treasure?" he repeated. "But what are you?"

"Your two treasures, then," she amended; and added practically: "Come on now, I want to dress your hurts."

"First," he said, putting his arm around her, "let's have one more look at the moon."

With their shoulders together they passed through the living room and out of the side door, where they stood each with an arm about the other and looked down the slope to the bay. The moon, above and behind the house, made the scene almost as bright as day. The sky had cleared entirely, and on the soft summer air floated the faint odor of honeysuckle.

In the middle of the bay, headed toward the house, they could see a black wedge, with silver ripples running along either side to mark it out. The forward point of the wedge gave forth now and again a cheerful *quack-quack*. The call of the leader was repeated variously by the other ducks in his train.

"Here come my ducks," said Tony, "wanting to be fed."

"Our ducks," Elinor corrected.

He looked down at her. She looked up. The moon fell full upon her face until his head, bending near her, cast it in shadow. He let the correction stand.

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Castaways of the Clouds

By WILL McMORROW

A group of people marooned on a drifting isle of the sky—imprisoned in a soaring fragment of a great dirigible air liner!



MY OLD UNLUCKY HOME

By Raymond Leslie Goldman

Author of "Hushaby, My Abie"

Superstitious or not, this experience of Ben Lowenstein's will make you careful of looking glasses.

I MET Gussie Sklower on the street yesterday," said Mrs. Ben Lowenstein across the breakfast table, one bright morning in September. "She tells me they rented a grand new apartment in the De Luxe, Ninety-eight Street by Broadway, two blocks from the subway; five rooms with two baths, paneled dining room, painted walls, upside-down bowl fixtures, and a separate door for deliveries."

Ben Lowenstein lost most of this description in the lusty draining of his coffee cup. He set down the cup, passed his napkin across his lips, and looked at his wife.

"What did you said, Clara?" he queried.

Mrs. Lowenstein was about to make the scathing retort this lack of attention merited; but she remembered her object in mentioning Gussie Sklower's newly acquired apartment, and decided not to ruffle the needful calm of Ben's mood.

"Why don't you listen when I talk, Ben?" she replied, unable to forego a bit of mild criticism. "I said Gussie Sklower rented a grand new apartment in the De Luxe, which it is a magnificent house in a stylish neighborhood, Ben—Ninety-eight Street by Broadway."

"You don't told me so?" Ben returned, folding the newspaper he had been scanning during the meal. "Also,

Clara, I guess Rockefeller is got a fine house, too."

"What do you mean—Rockefeller is got a fine house, too?" she demanded. "Since when is Henry Sklower a Rockefeller, Ben?"

"I didn't said he was," said Ben. "But if he keeps on making money like he made last year, Clara, and he don't pay his bills any more than he done last year, then he would pretty soon be."

Mrs. Lowenstein was about to rise to the defense of the maligned Henry Sklower when she again recalled the ultimate objective of the discussion. After all, the question of Henry's credit was nothing, and the possible acquisition of an apartment in the De Luxe everything, to her. Her present abode on Washington Heights had become especially distasteful to her after her meeting with the more fortunate Gussie.

"Gussie told me the apartment is a reg'lar dream, Ben," she went on. "It's got five rooms with two baths, a dining room finished in panels, painted walls, closets so big like rooms, and a separate deliveries entrance. The parlor is finished in English walnut with French doors into the dining room, and a fireplace of Eytalian marble; and the bathrooms is all Spanish tile."

"They left out Mexico," said Ben, rising. "And, anyway, I ain't retired from business yet, Clara, so I better get to work."

Mrs. Lowenstein was repulsed but not defeated. That evening, after she had regaled him with several of his favorite dishes which she herself had prepared with almost loving care, and after she perceived that he was comfortably settled in his favorite chair in the living room, with his shoe laces loosened and his vest unbuttoned, she again began the circuitous conversational journey, the intended destination of which was the De Luxe apartments.

"Did you ever stop to think, Ben,"

she remarked, "that the lease which we got on this here apartment is up on the first April?"

"I don't got to stop to think about it," he replied, lighting a cigar lazily. "Already they sent me a fresh lease to sign up for two more years with a hundred dollars raise. The nerve them fellers got, Clara, is terrible."

Mrs. Lowenstein brightened so perceptibly that Ben was moved to comment.

"You act like it was good news yet," he frowned. "Since when does they give you a percentage, Clara?"

"What do you mean by that, Ben? I think it's outrageous! I wouldn't give it to them!"

"The way you talk, Clara," he rejoined, "you would think it's something like a donation to the Relief, which you could give it or not give it like you please. Them fellers is so independence, y'understand, like they was the Queen of Sheba."

Mrs. Lowenstein shrugged. "For what do they got to be so independence? Is this the only apartment in the city, Ben? Is this neighborhood so up to date and stylish all of a sudden? No, I tell you, Ben——"

"Just the same, Clara——"

"——rather I should give them fellers a hundred dollars raise, I would get another apartment farther downtown, Ben; say, around Ninety-eight Street, which it is a better neighborhood any way you look at it. You take the De Luxe, f'r instance——"

"Just the same, Clara——"

"——there's a house, Ben, which this one don't compare one, two, three with. And for you it's more convenience, because it's only two blocks from the subway; and right there you could cut off anyway fifteen minutes from your ride. As for the house, Ben, compared to this——"

"Well, lemme tell you, Clara——"

"——you can't compare them at all.

With our Margery getting to be a young lady, we got to think also what it means to her we should got a fine stylish place, like in the De Luxe, f'r instance. This is her last year in boarding school, Ben, where she's got stylish friends——"

"'Senough!" Ben shouted. "What am I here—a dummy? I couldn't get a word in sidewise, even!"

"Couldn't you wait till I got finished?" she complained.

"I should live so long till you got finished, once you got started!" he retorted irritably. "You're like one of them radios, Clara—only, with a radio, once in a while a tube burns out. Furthermore, Clara, you could talk till you got blue in the face, y'understand, and it wouldn't do you no good. Because before I would pay out such fancy prices like they soak you in the De Luxe, y'understand, we would got snow in July."

"What do you mean—fancy prices?" she demanded. "You wouldn't believe what Gussie Sklower pays for her grand apartment in that house, Ben! Two hundred a year more than we would pay here, when we pay a hundred more. And such a apartment! Five rooms with two baths——"

Ben interrupted her by rising suddenly and striding determinedly toward the door.

"What Gussie Sklower got," he cried, "I don't care about it at all! She could got eighteen rooms and a bath for every day in the week! Furthermore, Clara, this here apartment is good enough for me; and if it ain't good enough for you, and for Margery also when she comes home, I'd like to know why not! And that's the end!"

He betook himself to the bedroom, where he began to disrobe with considerable violence. With his back to the bureau, he unbuttoned his shirt, whipping it off so forcefully that its tails skimmed the bureau top. There was a thud, a small crash; and Ben, turning,

beheld the damaged remains of a hand mirror on the floor.

"Ai!" he groaned, his hand laid alongside his cheek. "Seven years bad luck!"

Mrs. Lowenstein, attracted by the crash, entered the room and regarded the demolished mirror with troubled eyes.

"What did you done?" she cried. "Did you bust a looking-glass?"

He glared at her, as if she were the sole cause of this dire calamity.

"Did I bust it? No, I didn't bust it! It don't look busted, does it? Why ain't you careful, Clara, where you put such risky things like looking glasses?"

"Where do you put looking-glasses, if it ain't on the dresser?" she returned, flushing at the unjust accusation. "Do you maybe hang 'em on the ceiling, Ben? Anyway," she added despondently, "you busted it, and that means we got seven years bad luck!"

Feeling that he had failed in his attempt to shift the burden of responsibility, he changed his tactics.

"Yo!" he said lightly. "Right away because we bust a looking glass we got seven years bad luck! Also, Clara, if we bust ten looking-glasses, I guess we got seventy years bad luck and we might as well go blow our brains out." He regarded her scornfully. "I'm surprised, Clara, you should be so superstitious!"

This sudden maneuver caught her off guard, and for a moment it silenced her.

"Well, anyway," she said at length, starting to pick up the broken pieces, "that there mirror cost six fifty, Ben; and we got that much bad luck, anyway."

If the ill-omened incident caused Ben any anxiety, it was not sufficient to interfere with a night of profound slumber.

Next morning he awoke refreshed and at ease, ate his breakfast with

pleasure, and even managed to secure a seat in the subway.

When he encountered his friend, Sidney Soloman at the elevators of the Thirty-eighth Street loft building, in which Sidney had his cloak-and-suit showroom on the fourth floor, and Ben his skirt-and-blouse showroom on the seventh, Ben was in an amiable, expansive mood; to which Sidney's gloomy visage offered a notable contrast.

"Well, Sidney," Ben exclaimed, jovially poking that long-legged gentleman in the ribs, "what for do you look so sour this fine morning? Did you come from a funeral?"

"Funerals ain't the only things," replied Sidney. "Something mean just happened to me."

"F'r instance?" encouraged Ben.

"Some fool down the block has got to go to work and stick up a ladder across the sidewalk to put up a sign," said Sidney.

"What do you want he should do—use a balloon to put up a sign, Sidney?" Ben asked.

"He don't got to stick it clear across the sidewalk, does he," Sidney returned darkly, "so a man could walk right under it without he knows even a ladder is there?"

"No, he don't got to do that," Ben agreed. "But supposing you did walk under a ladder, Sidney? Since when are you superstitious?"

"I ain't superstitious," denied Sidney. "But it ain't good to walk under a ladder even if you ain't superstitious."

"Shush!" Ben exclaimed, with a sweep of his hand. "If you think that's bad so you get the dumps about it, what would you do if you done what I done last night?"

"I couldn't answer that," Sidney, replied, "because I don't know what you done."

"I busted a looking-glass!" Ben stated rather loftily. "That's what I done."

Sidney sucked his tongue several times and shook his head dolefully. "That's bad."

Ben looked up at him quickly. "What do you mean—that's bad? What's so bad about it?"

"It's worse even than walking under a ladder," declared Sidney. "At least, with a ladder, Ben, you get one good *klopp* with bad luck, y'understand, and then you're through. But when it's busted a looking-glass, y'understand, you get one *klopp* after another for seven years."

They were silent as they entered the elevator together and shot upward.

"Four!" Sidney called out.

"Good-by, Sidney," Ben said sourly. "I'm glad I had the chance to talk to you. You made me feel like somebody died yet."

When Ben reached his office he found waiting for him one Moe Grabiner, representative of the National Insurance Company. Moe was a short, thin man of forty, with sad eyes behind shell-rimmed spectacles, and a perpetually alarmed expression. He seized Ben's plump hand in a sort of wringing grip as one who condoles with a bereaved friend.

"How are you, Ben?" he sighed. "Not so good to-day?"

Ben removed his hand and seated himself uneasily.

"So-so," he replied. "Nothing's the matter with me, Grabiner."

Grabiner drew up a second chair and seated himself slowly, if such a performance is possible. At any rate, he gave the impression of sinking mournfully to the chair.

"You don't look so good, Ben."

"I tell you, Grabiner," Ben cried, "I feel all right even if I look rotten! Only something mean happened to me last night."

Grabiner shook his head slowly.

"That's too bad, Ben. I'm sorry. It's terrible."

"How do you know?" asked Ben. "You don't even know yet what happened! It wasn't so terrible, anyhow. All I done was to bust a looking-glass last night."

Grabiner started, as if an electric shock had stung him. He caught his lip between his teeth, and an expression of pain crossed his face.

"I knew it!" he murmured. "Ben, I knew it! When I woke up this morning, Ben, I had right away the funny feeling that you needed me. I don't know what it was; call it telepathy; call it anything you want to——"

Ben cut in impatiently:

"I don't call it nothing, Grabiner, except maybe crazy business. Because you could wake up with a million feelings, Grabiner, funny and otherwise, and still I don't need you unless maybe you want to place a order for some skirts and blouses."

Undiscouraged, Grabiner ignored this.

"Ben," he said portentously, "you done a terrible thing. A busted looking-glass is one of the world's most terrible things! A dear friend of mine busted a looking-glass six years ago. At that time he was a rich, prosperous, wealthy man. To-day he is in the gutter. And still he's got another year of it before he's done."

A steely glint came into Ben's blue eyes.

"For my part, Grabiner, he could be in the sewer. Because I got other things to do here, Grabiner, besides hearing what troubles other people is having. And anyway, if you are trying to sell me a policy, you could save your breath, because already you sold me all the policies I need and two other policies extra."

Grabiner looked grieved.

"I'm not trying to sell you a policy, Ben. What does it mean to me if you *should* decide to take out a little policy to cover your personal property? A

few measly dollars, maybe, that wouldn't buy my neckties."

"I ain't supposed to buy your neckties, neither," said Ben.

"This policy means nothing to me," Grabiner continued. "But you're a friend of mine, Ben. You've given me all your other insurance, and I'm grateful to you for it. And when I realize how the crime wave in this city is constantly on the up grade, I feel it's my duty to warn you, Ben Lowenstein!"

The haggard sadness suddenly left him, and its place was taken by a sort of rigid horror. He became a prophet on the mountaintop who, with upraised finger, voiced the prediction of impending calamity.

"Ben Lowenstein, do you realize that this city is to-day passing through an era of crime and disorder such as was never before equaled for many years? Do you realize that while there were many holdups, burglaries, kidnappings, and murders and so forth in 1926, there were twice as many in 1927—to give the exact figures—and three times as many in 1928? And this is only the beginning of 1929! Did you ever stop to think about this, Ben——"

"Wait!" shouted Ben. "What's the use keeping up asking me questions if you don't stop it a minute so I could answer?"

"There is only one answer, Ben Lowenstein," quivered Moe Grabiner. "Only one, my friend! *Protect yourself!* Protect yourself and your wife and children! You read the papers, don't you? You read about the horrible things that happen every day. Didn't only last week a man come home to find his wife and children lying dead, and the house robbed? Didn't day before yesterday some bloodthirsty demons in human form enter a home and—— Where do you live, Ben?"

Ben took out a handkerchief and mopped a clammy brow and the moist top of his bald head.

"I live in Washington Heights. But it——"

"I thought so! Yes, it was somewhere on Washington Heights. They entered that loving home, and when they left, four loving people were lying dead, and a thousand-dollar diamond ring was missing! Ben Lowenstein, it's about time you realize these horrible things. Theft and robbery every place! People are kidnaped and held for ransom by the Black Hand! Let me tell you about the terrible Eyetalian Black Hand——"

"Grabiner!" Ben interrupted, shaking off the spell. "Get out! Get out quick from this office! What's the matter with you, anyhow? Do you want to make me so nervous I couldn't sleep nights?"

Grabiner rose sadly, kicked out each foot to straighten his trousers, rearranged his cravat, and sighed.

"All right, Ben," he said gravely. "But you can never say I didn't give you fair warning. I could give you a policy that would completely cover all——"

Ben was on his feet, his eyes blazing, his shaking finger pointing to the door.

"Get out!" he commanded. "Get out and stay out!"

The office door had scarcely closed upon the departing form of Moe Grabiner when it opened again to admit Sidney Soloman. Sidney was not alone lugubrious, but he managed the difficult feat of being excited at the same time.

"Ha!" said Ben, looking at him. "Did you come to cheer me up, too, Sidney? With the kind of fellers like you and that there low-life, Moe Grabiner, you could drive a man crazy."

Sidney was too excited to be insulted.

"Do you know what?" he cried.

"Sure I know what," Ben replied. "I'm shivering all over like a leaf already from nothing."

"Well," said Sidney dramatically, "you could go ahead and shiver like a

leaf, Ben; only not from nothing! Do you know what I just heard? I just heard that crook, Abe Feinberg, made a fifty-thousand-dollars failure!"

Ben sank back into his chair and stared at the bearer of these evil tidings.

"Not—not Abe Feinberg of Feinberg & Grossman?" he gasped.

"Sure!" affirmed Sidney. "What Abe Feinberg do you think? Just a minute ago I hear he made a failure. And that means I'm out maybe a thousand dollars if I'm lucky."

"What about me?" cried Ben, rising and beginning to pace the narrow office. "I'm out then twenty-five hundred." He groaned. "Twenty-five hundred!"

Sidney's excitement departed; but his increased lugubriousness atoned for its passing.

"Well," he sighed heavily, "I knew it!"

"You knew he was going to make a failure?"

"No; but I knew some bad luck was bound to happen. When a feller walks under a ladder, all you got to do is sit back and wait, and sooner or later you get a good *klopp*. I'm only glad that it come so quick and got over with it soon."

Ben suddenly stopped his pacing and turned a pasty face and horrified eyes to Sidney.

"Sidney!" he choked. "*And I busted a looking-glass!*"

A deep, palpitant silence followed this statement. Then Sidney said:

"I ain't superstitious no more than you are, Ben, but just the same, Ben, when you bust a looking-glass in a certain place, y'understand, they got bad luck in that place for seven years, and that's all there is to it. And furthermore, Ben, I wouldn't live by your house, Ben, if they give it to me free rent and a million dollars a year in the bargain. And that's all I got to say."

Having unbosomed himself of this cheerful statement, he opened the door;

and Ben was left alone with his disquieting thoughts.

For half an hour Ben alternately paced the office and sat stolidly in his desk chair; and the silence was unbroken save for his occasional groans.

At length, with sudden resolve, he swung his chair around and reached for the telephone.

"Hello!" he said, when he had got his number. "Is Moe Grabiner there? He ain't? Well, when he comes in again tell him to come right over by my office! Yes, this is Ben Lowenstein talking."

A great weight, composed of gloom, depression and apprehension, settled firmly between Ben's rounded shoulders. When, late that afternoon, there came the unexpected cancellation of an order Ben had taken several days before, this weight of gloom, depression and apprehension increased to a quivering sense of impending disaster, and Ben's condition verged upon panic.

He was so thoroughly prepared to meet calamity face to face that he was not surprised, upon his return home that evening, to find his wife in a nervous state paralleling his own; and when he entered his bedroom and saw her lying weakly on the bed with a damp towel conspicuously placed across her brow, he merely asked hoarsely:

"Now what is it, Clara?"

With a great effort she swung her legs over the bedside and rose to a sitting position, the better to converse with him. With one hand she held the damp towel to her brow, using the other as a conversational aid.

"I'm all to pieces," she said weakly.

"I know it," he said. "But what happened? If you don't told me pretty soon I'll drop over, Clara, and then you won't got to told me at all."

"I nilly got killed!" she declared. "Such excitement you never seen in your life, Ben. In another minute, if

he didn't got out, I would got to make him arrested."

"Listen!" Ben shouted. "Is this here a puzzles game, Clara? Would you told me, or do I got to make guesses at it? Who was it if he didn't got out you would got to make him arrested?"

"Why don't you wait till I told you, Ben, instead of getting right away excited when you don't even know what you're getting excited about? To-day the feller which brings up the ice, Ben, comes into the kitchen and begins a freshness with Nora until that there poor girl, y'understand, nilly drops over already, she's so scared. The feller was half drunk, Ben, and I tell you he was like a crazy man. I heard the rumpus going on and I run into the kitchen and tell that low-life he should make a quick get-out, y'understand, or I make him right away arrested. So he goes away."

Ben passed a cold hand across the top of his barren head.

"Then what do you mean, Clara, you should told me you nilly got killed?" he asked accusingly. "Is that nilly getting killed, Clara?"

"Am I finished yet?" she demanded. "Couldn't you wait till I told you all of it? So that there feller goes away, Ben; and when he's gone, y'understand, I call up the ice company and told them what happened up here, and they right away say they would attend to it and you could count on it. So I don't thought much more about it, Ben, until a coupla hours afterward the bell rings and myself I open it. And right there before my eyes, Ben, as plain as day already, is that there Eyetalian."

"Eyetalian!" cried Ben. "What Eyetalian?"

"Didn't I told you he was a Eyetalian? Well, that's what he was, Ben—a Eyetalian; and also he was such a Eyetalian, Ben, which he couldn't hardly speak English at all."

Ben shook his head gravely.

"Them Eyetalians is bad fellers to

monkey with, Clara. Just to-day Moe Grabiner was telling me about it. They got Black Hands and Evil Eyes. They're bad fellers to monkey with."

"Are you telling me or am I telling you?" she cried. "And anyway, Ben, who said I was monkeying with Eyetalians? Because this here feller comes by the door and rings it so I open it, is that monkeying with him, Ben?"

"Never mind," said Ben. "Tell me what happened."

"Well, this here feller is standing by the door, y'understand, and when I open it up, he gives a push like anything and comes into the house. Never Ben, so long as I live did I seen a face like that feller got it! If I tried to make a face like he got it, I couldn't do it. His face is red like fire, his eyes is all white, and he's got veins in his neck, y'understand, so purple like——"

"Clara," put in Ben wearily, "couldn't you leave out a few colors and told me what happened? I had a hard day to-day."

"If you would seen a face like that feller got it, Ben, you wouldn't forget it so quick, neither. And when he gets in the hall, Ben, he hollers: 'So you ged a meda fire——'"

"Clara," cried Ben. "Won't you please for a favor talk English so I could understand what you said? Maybe all of a sudden you could talk Eyetalian, but I couldn't. So if you want I should stand here and listen, you got to talk English, and that's all there is to it."

"Well, he said for why did I go and get him fired from his job? Because when he gets back to the ice house, Ben, them fools has got to go to work and tell him I called up; and then they give him a good kick-out. And so he says that——"

"It makes no diff'rence what he says," Ben cut in. "What counts is what did he *done*."

"What did he *done*? You should

hear what he *done*! He pulls out a *knife*, Ben, which it was *this* big—like a little sword—and he says he would cut me like I was a fish, Ben! I give a holler, Ben, which it is a wonder you didn't heard it down by your office; and first thing you know in runs Mr. Klaus, the super'tendent, with the feller which runs the elevator. But before they could grab him, he runs away. And from outside he hollers something terrible and he says he would cut me like a fish even if he got to wait twenty years! That's what he *done*, Ben, and if I'm all to pieces it's no wonder."

She stopped and sank back weakly to the bed. Ben was silent a while as he paced the room, his hands clasped behind his back and various sounds issuing from his nose and throat.

"Eyetalians is bad fellers to monkey with," he murmured at length. "Until I could make that feller arrested, I couldn't get a second's rest at all."

"Make him arrested!" cried his wife. "Then you would sure get a knife in the back, Ben. In the first place, you couldn't find him; and even if maybe you could, then I'd rather give him a new job than make him arrested."

Ben clasped his head between his hands and groaned.

"Such trouble we got to have! Until we could get out from this here apartment we would get one terrible *klopp* after the other for seven years!"

Considering Mrs. Lowenstein's weakened condition, she rose to a sitting posture with surprising agility.

"What do you mean, Ben—until we could get out from this apartment?"

"Clara," cried Ben, "didn't we bust last night a looking-glass? Didn't I told you then we would get bad luck for seven years on account from it and you give me a laugh in my face? Well, now the laugh is on the other foot, Clara. To-day is such a day like I never had it before in my life. First that thief Abe Feinberg has a fifty-

thousand-dollars failure, and I lose maybe twenty-five hundred dollars. Then that low-life, Marcus Swartz, goes to work and cancels a big order. And then, to cap the smilax, I come home and find a Eytalian is cutting my wife with a knife like she was a fish! Do you think we could stand it like that for seven years?"

"But, Ben! Didn't you said——"

"Clara!" cried Ben. "'Senough! I got enough already! You could talk till you got blue in the face, and still I say we got to get out from this here apartment as soon as the lease is up. And that's the end!"

For a moment, surprise rendered Mrs. Lowenstein speechless.

"All right, Ben," she said finally. "You don't got to go to work and bust a blood vessels. If you are going to make such a rumpus, why, all right. We'll move, then."

All during that night Ben's nerves were like the vibrating strings of a harp. Three times he rose from his bed and tiptoed to the bedroom door to listen into the stillness for the sound of stealthy footsteps; and when, toward dawn, he fell asleep, his dreams were troubled with gruesome visions of wild-eyed Italians, glittering knives, and huge, grinning fishes.

When he awoke he was bathed in cold perspiration and saturated with a hopeless depression.

"Clara," he said heavily at the breakfast table, "if you are going to give a look for a apartment, you better begin right away to-day. The quicker we get out from this here Jonah place, the sooner. I couldn't stand it at all."

"To-day I begin," she returned. "But we couldn't move until our lease is up, could we? And, besides, when you get a new place they got to decoration it, don't they, which it takes maybe a few weeks, anyway? But to-day I'll give a look around and see which is what."

"Why is it, Clara, we didn't got a letter from our Margery yesterday?" he asked after a pause, a troubled look in his eyes. "Ain't yesterday the day we should got it?"

"Is this the first time she missed, Ben?" she replied. "When a girl is in boarding school, Ben, she can't always write every other day reg'lar. If you are going to begin to worry about every little thing, Ben, you might just as well go blow your brains out, and it would be the same thing."

Ben nibbled at his toast. "Until I get out from this here apartment, Clara, I expect the worst," he returned miserably. "And the chances is, we would get it, too."

When Ben returned home that evening, he was almost disappointed to find that the worst ill fortune that greeted him was his wife's statement regarding her exploration in search of an apartment.

"You couldn't get a apartment in the De Luxe, Ben, if you would pay out a million dollars. Gussie Sklower took the last one, Ben. Such luck some people got, you wouldn't believe."

"Is the De Luxe the only apartment house in the tity, Clara?" he demanded. "Why does it got to be the De Luxe? Just so we get out from here, it could be next door just as well."

"If we move," she retorted, "couldn't we as well better us?"

"If we move," he replied, "we would better us even if we moved into a tenyment."

Two days passed without event, but their very placidity disturbed Ben almost as much as a series of catastrophies would have done.

"The longer nothing happens," he pondered morbidly, "the worse it is when it does!"

In his office he sat on the extreme edge of his chair, all his nerves taut and singing. Whenever the door was

opened he was instantly on his feet and facing the visitor. At all hours of the day; he reached for his phone and called his apartment.

"Clara? Is everything still all right?"

"Yes, Ben. But still I can't find a apartment."

"Did that Eyetalian show up again, Clara?"

"No, he didn't, Ben. But once, Ben, this morning, I thought sure I seen that low-life standing across the street. But maybe it wasn't him at all."

"If it wasn't him," he complained, "you don't got to told me at all."

"Didn't you ask me?"

"You don't got to make me shiver, do you?"

"You talk like a crazy man!" she cried, just before hanging up the receiver. "All of a sudden you want to pick up a fight!"

"Is that so?" he shouted; but the connection was broken. Muttering to himself, he pushed the phone away; then jumped to his feet and spun around as he heard the door open. It was Sidney, as usual in the throes of excitement; and Ben regarded him with manifest dissatisfaction.

"Well, Sidney," was his greeting, "what you got now to make me feel rotten?"

"What kind of talk is that?" Sidney returned with righteous anger. "Since when do I make you feel rotten? I come all the way up here to told you something and you insult me to my face. That's what I get for being a friend. I should waste my time telling you about Henry Sklower's failure!"

"Henry Sklower's failure!" Ben echoed. "Since when did he got a failure?"

"Now you stick up your ears!" cried Sidney. "But before, all I was good enough for was to get insulted to my face! Yes, he got a failure because

Abe Feinberg goes busted the other day and Sklower loses so much money by it that he goes busted also. But why should I waste my breath on a insulter like you!"

"All right, then," said Ben, "if that's the way you feel about it, Sidney, you don't got to told me at all. Anyway, I didn't mean to insult you, Sidney. When you come in I was just mad at my wife, and if I say things I don't mean, you can't blame me."

"What's the matter with your wife?" Sidney inquired with interest.

"She's like a crazy woman!" Ben declared wrathfully. "Always she keeps me on pins and needles till I can't hardly stand it!"

Sidney tapped the roof of his mouth with his tongue.

"That's terrible!" he sympathized. "I'm glad my wife ain't such a woman."

Ben looked up at him quickly. "Are you insulting my wife, Sidney?"

For a moment Sidney was speechless; then he made for the door.

"Before we got a fight here, I'm going to leave. Here lately you are like a crazy man. After this when I got news I'll keep it to myself."

"That's fine," Ben said caustically. "Either your news is bad or it's worse even. Can't you for once tell me something funny?"

But Sidney had closed the door behind him, and Ben was left alone. The mantle of Jove had fallen about his shoulders and he spent the day hurling thunderbolts with reckless abandon. Manny Lipman, the shipping clerk, and Miss Josephs, the bookkeeper, Dave Cohn and Sam Kuttner, the salesmen—all received an individual share of Ben's nervous ill humor.

At six thirty that evening Ben let himself into his apartment. Rather, it could be stated with greater vividness, he crawled under the ropes, seated himself in his corner and eagerly awaited the sound of the gong. Not alone had

he a chip on his shoulder, but he was simply covered with chips, one of which could not help being knocked off. He was prepared for an evening of verbal violence; for a connubial *mêlée* which would, perhaps, release the pressure of his tightened nerves.

He threw his derby and topcoat to a chair in the hall and walked into the living room. That room not harboring his antagonist, he strode into the dining room; thence to the bedroom, and finally to the kitchen. By this time he realized that he was alone in the apartment.

He pondered this fact uneasily. It was Thursday, he remembered, and Nora was therefore absent on leave; but he could not understand why Clara was among the missing. With a worried frown between his eyes, he returned to the living room, the windows of which faced the street; and at one of these windows he stationed himself, his troubled eyes anxiously scrutinizing every female figure that moved on the sidewalk below.

He looked at his watch so often that the hands of it scarcely altered position between consultations; and when, at last, these hands formed the angle of six forty-five, and Clara had not yet returned, and the autumn dusk was deepening, Ben began to use the telephone:

"Hello, Mrs. Ginsberg. . . . This is Ben Lowenstein talking. . . . Is my wife by your house? . . . She ain't? . . . You didn't seen her at all? . . ." All right, Mrs. Ginsberg. . . . Thanks. . . . Oh, yes, I guess that's so, maybe. Good-by.

"Hello. . . . Is this Friedman's apartment? . . . What? . . . What did you said? . . . Listen! Couldn't you talk English so I could understand it? . . . What? . . . Oh! Friedmans is all in Atlantic City! . . . What? I could write to them at the. . . . What do I care where I could write to them!

"Hello. . . . Hello. . . . Oh, hello, there, Mr. Plesner. . . . This is Ben Lowenstein talking. . . . Yes. . . . I thought maybe if your wife seen my Clara, Mr. Plesner. . . . All right; I'll wait. . . . Hello! . . . She *didn't*! . . . Yes. . . . Yes, business is pretty good. . . . No, Mr. Plesner, I didn't know Hersh was in town. . . . No. . . . Listen, Mr. Plesner; I'm worried about my Clara, Mr. Plesner. If you want to talk business matters with me, you could please come to my office. . . . I ain't getting uppish, Mr. Plesner, but I ain't got time. . . . All right, then. . . . Good-by!"

At seven ten he had exhausted the numbers on Clara's list of sewing-circle members. At seven eleven, he was again at the front windows which now revealed a lamp-lighted night. At seven twelve, he began to walk up and down the room, looking out of the windows when he passed them, mopping his moist face with his handkerchief. At seven thirteen, he was visualizing things that Dante omitted from his "*Inferno*" as being too horrible. At seven fourteen the telephone bell trilled sweetly and terribly.

Ben sprinted to the bedroom and snatched up the telephone receiver.

"Hello. . . . What? . . . Marretto! . . . What? . . . Please, mister, I couldn't understand such *Eye-talian*. . . . Oh! She's by *you*. . . . What? . . . How much? . . . Two hundred dollars. . . . What was them numbers? . . . West Sixty-six. . . . I *would* hurry, only. . . . Hello! Hello! Hello! . . . Op'ra-tor, I was talking. . . . Nobody on my line now? Ai!"

With a palsied hand he replaced the receiver on its hook, and staggered to his feet. For a moment he stood swaying in the *murk-filled room*; then, with a cry of anguish, he ran to the door, down the hall, and, without thinking

even to snatch up his hat, he rushed from his apartment.

Outside on the sidewalk he hesitated for an undecided instant. His blurred gaze suddenly fell upon the blue uniform of a policeman, and with a wild cry Ben ran to the corner where the officer was standing.

"Quick!" Ben cried hoarsely, frantically grasping the policeman's arm. "They got my wife! They got my Clara! They——"

"Hey!" cried the policeman. "Wait a minute! What's that?"

"Couldn't you heard me?" screamed Ben. "They got my Clara! Them Eyetalians got my Clara!"

"Now just a minute," said the policeman calmly. "Cool down, brother; cool down. Now what's the trouble?"

"He calls me up with the phone," gasped Ben. "That Eyetalian which says he would cut my wife like a fish! He's *got* her! He wants I should bring him two hundred dollars for a transom!" He paused, inarticulate for a moment, while the policeman strove for understanding.

"Where is your wife?" asked the policeman.

Ben held his whirling head between his hands, squeezed shut his eyes, and tried to think.

Finally he stammered the address.

A taxicab was passing and the policeman acted quickly. A shrill whistle brought the machine to a stop at the far corner; and Ben and the policeman raced toward it.

"Drive as fast as you can," the policeman told the driver, giving the address.

The driver acted according to the instincts of all taxicab chauffeurs and exulted in his authorized defiance of the speed laws. As the machine tore through the streets, the policeman en-

deavored to unravel the tangled threads of Ben's incoherent narrative.

"But what did the man say when he phoned you?" asked the policeman. "Did he say your wife would be all right if——"

"He didn't said nothing about that," Ben groaned. "All he says was that she was with him, and I should hurry down right away quick with two hundred dollars for a transom. All what he said I couldn't understand it at all because he talks such Eyetalian—— My Clara! My own wife! Such a grand woman never walked!"

The taxicab finally came to a stop at the curb. The policeman flung open the door and leaped out, Ben at his heels. Before them was a remodeled brownstone house with a long flight of steps leading to the door. On the ground floor, to the left of the stairs, was a large plate-glass window bearing gilt lettering which proclaimed:

T. MARRETTO

Real Estate and Insurance

Ben stared through the window into the lighted interior. Within, he could see his wife, conversing pleasantly with a tall, dark man. And all at once understanding came to him. Henry Sklower's failure! Gussie Sklower's apartment in the De Luxe! A lease with two hundred dollars advance!

Ben looked up at the policeman sheepishly. He reached into his pocket and drew forth a five-dollar bill.

"Mister," he said, "excuse it, please, but I made a mistake. My Clara's all right. That's *her* right there, renting a new apartment. You can't arrest nobody for that, ain't it?" He slipped the bill into the policeman's hand. "Go buy yourself a bottle," he smiled. "If you don't know where to get it, nobody knows."

Watch for more of this series about Ben Lowenstein—by Raymond Leslie Goldman.



THE BRIDGE IN THE JUNGLE

By Reginald Campbell

How a great Asiatic bridge helped dramatically to change the lives and hearts of three people.

JAMES THORNTON, builder of bridges and roads, stood on the veranda of his little bamboo bungalow, and gazed thoughtfully at the River Me Teep flowing at the foot of his dwelling.

Thornton, leaning over the veranda, thought of his bridge. After weeks of toil, the structure was now completed and the way for the cart road lay clear from the Siamese railway to the French Indo-Chinese border.

Two miles to the south of him, at a point where the Me Teep joined the great main river, Me Yome, reposed a tiny native village. One mile to the north of him was situated the ramshackle camp of his native coolies. Close by that camp, the newly built wooden bridge spanned the River Me Teep. Elsewhere, all was rolling jungle, burned brittle by months of scorching hot weather.

Pictures arose in Thornton's mind. Soon bullock caravans would be moving to and fro between the two countries. Along the cart road and over

the bridge would come Annamites, Shans, Kamoos, Yunnanites, bearing jungle-cloth, walnuts and skins of wild animals to trade with the Laos and Siamese who lived near the railway. Strange, dusky tribes would meet one another for the first time, and he, James Thornton, would be the cause of it all.

He thrilled with pride. For mile after mile he had cut his road through virgin forest, and now that the difficult bridge across the Me Teep had been successfully completed, his task was well-nigh over. Others would enjoy the fruits of his labor, of course, but it mattered not to him; he had the great, nameless joy of the pioneer who opens up wide spaces—and, save for an ever-present dread of fire, he was content.

Fire! Fire wrote itself in vast, searing letters across the cloudless sky; fire hissed and crackled in his ears; fire danced and flickered before his overstrained eyes—for this year's hot weather was the worst that ever he had known.

Would the rains never break? The

end of May had come, yet still no signs of the welcome monsoon that would bring the downpour from over the distant hills. Instead, for day after day the sun had shone out of heavens the color of smoky brass, so that by now the jungle was a simmering wilderness, ready at any moment to burst into flames and destroy the work of many months.

He had taken all reasonable precautions to guard the bridge. At each end of it he had cleared away the masses of dry, brittle bamboo that might feed a fire, and his coolies had been given orders to keep a strict watch on the bridge both by day and by night.

Yet accidents might happen, especially since, only the previous morning, he had been forced to dismiss two of his men for petty pilfering. They might, he reflected, attempt to revenge themselves upon him by setting fire to the bridge, and a frown of worry crossed Thornton's brow as he stared into the rapidly falling darkness.

Presently a soft swish of skirts sounded behind him, and his wife's voice summoned him to dinner. Back in the tiny living room, he sat down to the tough, stringy chicken served them by a black-visaged Lao cook. Thornton ate the tasteless courses slowly, mechanically, his brain revolving on the bridge.

On the opposite side of the table his wife patiently waited for him to finish; she had lost the desire for food herself.

Sheila Thornton was very much alone. Once there had been a time when, returning from his work, Jim would have put his arms round her, told her of his hopes and fears, and planned their joint future.

But that was long ago. True, the coming of her child had brought them together again for some few, short months, then his work had more and more absorbed him, and now her main

consolation lay in her little three-year-old boy.

Shadows from the oil lamp flickered on the walls, and in the suffocating atmosphere mosquitoes droned shrilly. From somewhere in the jungle outside a panther coughed, and a shiver went through the woman's frame. Save for the boy, all interest in life had long since gone. In Bangkok, four hundred miles away to the southward, were shops, frocks, lights, dancing—all the attractions of the civilized East to help a woman who had lost most, if not all, of her husband's love. But here, round the flimsy bamboo bungalow, the jungle brooded and wild beasts slunk furtively through the night.

The meal over, she saw her husband fling himself into a long rattan chair and gaze moodily out into the darkness. He was becoming more and more in the habit of giving way to long spells of brooding silence, and that feeling of loneliness returned in double force to the woman. Obeying a sudden impulse, she crossed over to him and laid one hand on his knee.

"Jim," she whispered.

He looked at her vaguely, as if scarcely conscious of her presence; and the corners of her mouth began to tremble. She wanted him to take her in his arms, to speak to her, to comfort her; but one glance told her that his mind was miles away, and she quickly dropped her hand.

"No," she said wearily, in reply to his question, "there's nothing the matter, Jim. I'm a little tired, that's all."

She moved toward the bookcase, selected a novel, and began reading. An hour passed, neither breaking the silence; then with an electrical movement the man sprang to his feet.

"I must go to the bridge!" he exclaimed.

"The bridge?" she echoed. "But it's late; it's nearly ten o'clock. You can't possibly go at this hour, Jim."

"I must, Sheila. There's some deviltry going on up there; I'm sure of it. I'll call the cook to take me up in the dugout."

"And leave me all alone in the bungalow?"

"You've got the ayah, haven't you?"

"I thought I told you this morning, Jim, that she went down to her village yesterday. She'd complained of slight fever, and wanted a few days at home, so I let her go."

Thornton shrugged his shoulders. He remembered now that his wife had mentioned the matter to him, but it had slipped his memory. What were trifling domestic details compared to his all-important work? Still—he frowned—he could scarcely leave his wife and child in a lonely shanty built in the heart of the jungle. No real danger could threaten them, of course, but women were apt to nurse strange fears after dark.

He sank down into his chair again, and brooded. But for his family he would have built a temporary bungalow close by the bridge, at a point where he could keep the erection under constant personal supervision. But no, that wasn't to be. Near the bridge the water supply was bad, so his wife had said, and the locality too parched and hot.

Here, a mile below, the stream ran clear and cool, and some evergreen bushes on the bank afforded a little shade. Accordingly, he had been forced to choose this spot as a dwelling place, and the bridge might go to the dickens for all that Sheila cared.

What, he asked himself bitterly, *did* she care about his work nowadays? Here was he, slogging away from morning till night, in the hope that soon he might have saved sufficient money to enable Sheila to take the kid home and provide it with a decent education. Yet, in spite of all his efforts, she looked upon his work as a mere nuisance that

came between her and the joys of civilization. Thornton stirred uneasily and turned his head to the darkness.

The sound of crying came from the adjoining room. The woman left her husband, soothed the child, then returned. "Jim," she said quietly, "you haven't answered me. Are you going up to the bridge, as you said you would?"

"I suppose I can't," he replied petulantly.

The tone of his words stung her. He cared nothing for her, even less for the child. Mother love seized her, and for the moment brought out unexpected depths in her calm nature.

"If it came to choosing between saving us or the bridge, I believe you'd choose the bridge!" she said stormily.

The man, reddening with indignation, stood up and faced her. A hot answer rose to his lips, but he fought it down. Under the circumstances, argument was futile.

"You're overtired, Sheila," he said, restraining himself with difficulty. "I should go to bed, if I were you."

She turned toward the bedroom. At the threshold, however, she glanced at him over her shoulder, and their eyes met. The quick anger in hers had gone, to be replaced by that look of yearning loneliness. But her color was high, and the man saw, almost with a shock of surprise, that she still was very beautiful. Memory winged back through the years, and those delicious little details of their earlier life returned to him, looming out in tragic contrast to the existence—that was the only word for it—which they now spent together.

Perhaps, after all, he was as much to blame as she; perhaps he had allowed his work to absorb him too much, leaving him little time to devote to Sheila and the child. He took a quick step forward.

"Sheila——" he began. But Sheila by now had closed the door, and a

golden opportunity for reconciliation had passed.

Left alone, Thornton crossed over to the veranda. Soon a feeling of self-consciousness enveloped him, as if he had been guilty of some sentimental foolishness. He forced a laugh to his lips, then, dismissing the matter from his mind, concentrated once more upon his work.

Since he could not leave the bungalow that night, he could at least keep watch from the veranda for any tell-tale flicker that might arise and redden the jungle away to the north. Accordingly he drew a rattan chair near the veranda railing and, seating himself in it, began his long vigil.

Midnight soon showed on the luminous dial of his watch, yet the heat, instead of decreasing, was becoming more and more intense as the night wore on. The slightest movement caused him to perspire, and the very heaviness of the atmosphere caused a sudden chill to clamp his heart.

The earth lay dead, stricken under a pall of suffocating heat; nature seemed poised, waiting to strike some terrible blow against which all human effort would prove useless. A sense of foreboding numbed James Thornton's mind and nerves.

Thornton awoke with a start. He was stiff and cramped from sleeping in an unnatural position in the cane chair. Glancing at his watch, he saw that the time was three o'clock in the morning.

He swore, then looked up to the north, to behold a sight that set his heart pounding. A faint flicker was rising and falling against the sky. A jungle fire, perhaps, but more than likely the bridge was burning.

Seizing a hurricane lantern, he rushed to the rear veranda of the bungalow and roused the sleeping cook. Together they ran down to the river bank and jumped into the little dugout that

was moored to one of the stilts on which the bungalow was raised.

The dugout was cast off, and Thornton yelled hoarse words to his wife in the building above. He heard her faint reply through the wall, and a second later the canoe shot round a bend, heading north.

The lantern being more of a hindrance than a help, Thornton extinguished it and, seizing a second paddle, drove the frail craft furiously through the water. Between the paddle beats he glanced up at the sky. It was now a dull, dead black, with no stars showing, and some faint hope stirred in the man's breast. Rain might soon fall, the heavy, tropical rain that would put out a fire with lightning speed.

He thrust on, with the perspiration streaming down his features and a soundless prayer on his lips for rain.

After ten minutes of terrific exertion the dugout rounded a bend and the bridge came into view. It was burning in three places, but even as Thornton grounded the canoe, a few spots of rain fell, and by the time he had reached the coolies' camp the drops had become slightly heavier.

He rushed into the men's bamboo shelter and kicked and prodded at the sleepers, but not a movement came from any of the recumbent forms. A sudden fear caught him, and, bending down, he raised the eyelids of one of the coolies. The eyes were glazed and staring, and Thornton drew back aghast. The dismissed fire guards had planned their vengeance only too well, for they had drugged their late companions by gently blowing the smoke of the Yang bark into their dwelling. He had heard of such cases before.

Leaving the coolies to sleep off the drug, Thornton ran to the bridge. Piles of brushwood, so he now perceived, had been placed at either end of the bridge and in the middle. It was the brushwood he had seen burning, on his way

up in the canoe, but now one end of the bridge itself had caught and was beginning to roar fiercely.

He seized buckets and, aided by the cook, rushed into the shallow water of the river, filled the pails, then returned and emptied the contents onto the end that was alight. Smoke and flame caught him in the face. He fell over, covered in grime and filth, only to rise to his feet and redouble his efforts.

His frantic movements were in vain, for what were a few puny bucketfuls against such a fire? One end of the bridge he managed, indeed, to extinguish partially, but by now the remaining portions were beginning to flare. The piles—he must save them, for once they were properly alight the work of months would be wasted. The rains would soon break, and to rebuild the foundations in the wet season would be impossible. The new piles, too, would have to be made of teak dragged from a far distant forest—a task that would take weeks to perform. An oath rose on Thornton's lips as he darted here, there and everywhere, armed with his futile buckets.

Then, suddenly, when he was almost in despair, the whole sky ribboned out in white-hot streamers above him, and the universe split in half in one tearing, shrieking crash of thunder that well-nigh brought him to his knees. And then down came the real rain.

He had never known such rain before. It descended in solid sheets, and was not like rain at all: it was a compact mass of water plumping down from the overloaded heavens in one vast cloud-burst. In less than five minutes the fires hissed and sputtered into oblivion, whereupon Thornton seized his lantern and darted onto the bridge to inspect the damage. No material harm had been done, so far as he could see, for the piles and framework were merely charred, and only a few odd beams would have to be replaced.

With the rain streaming over head and shoulders, Thornton breathed an hysterical prayer of thanks. The down-pour had saved his bridge. He lifted his arms above him and reveled in the wildness of the night. Cosmos had turned to chaos; the thunder and the lightning boomed and crashed and crackled and volleyed in continuous flashing salvos round the sky, while the rain cascaded down with unabated fury.

In his overwrought state, a new fear shortly assailed him. The bridge might be struck by lightning! He tore back to the coolie shelter, to find that the men, aroused at last by the tumult outside, were one and all awake. Their expressions still were dazed, but by the sheer force of will power he got them out into the open, where the dank, swirling air quickly revived them. He then posted them round the bridge.

A new note sounded in the storm of noise. The River Me Teep was rising, and rising fast, for the earth, burned bare and harsh, absorbed the rain only in fissures, so that the rest of the water literally bounced off the hills and came swooshing down into the river. Through the ever-increasing thrum of the torrent Thornton soon heard a crash boom against the piles of the bridge, and the whole structure shivered.

With the aid of hissing flares that somehow survived the rain, he saw that a large tree, evidently blown down by the storm and swept along in the arms of the river, had jammed sidewise across the stream against the piles.

With long poles the coolies desperately endeavored to thrust the base of the tree upstream so that the current might send the obstruction down between the columns of the bridge. But all their efforts proved useless; the force of the current was too strong for them, and the tree remained stuck fast in its position.

Three more great hulks of timber came riding down the flood, crashed up

against the first, then, swinging round, stretched from bank to bank. Wedged up against the foundations of the bridge, they now formed a complete dam across the swirling waters.

Dawn paled, a dim, sickly dawn, and by its aid Thornton saw the danger. Below the bridge the water was barely three feet higher than normal level, but above it the Me Teep was a good ten feet higher and already spilling over its banks.

The pressure of the flood, held up by the dam of trees and augmented by the steady rain, was constantly increasing, and shortly the strain on the bridge would be enormous. He must get his two elephants, the elephants provided him for heavy dragging work, into the river at once. Thank God it was light at last.

He called to their mahouts, and soon the gigantic animals were almost shoulder-deep in the water. With trunks, tusks and heads they heaved mightily. Two logs moved slightly, then suddenly, without warning, the dam dissolved and the timber went booming and crashing in between the piles and away downstream.

The river, released from bondage, leaped hungrily forward in one great, surging, hissing wave, its crest passing a bare four feet beneath the platform of the bridge. The elephants, carried off their legs, went down with it, to land, bellowing and trumpeting, several hundred yards below the scene of operations. But the bridge, the precious bridge, was saved.

Thornton drew a deep breath of relief, then frowned. Though the thunder and lightning by now had passed, the rain still poured from a gray, leaden sky, and he should therefore remain by the bridge till the sudden, unheard-of rise in the Me Teep had abated somewhat. After that he could return to his bungalow a mile away downstream.

The bungalow! For the first time during the past three hours he gave it a thought, and for a moment sheer horror rooted him to the spot in which he was standing. The great wave of released water, bearing on its crest the boles of mighty trees, would have gone thundering down the river, carrying all before it.

The frail stilts of the bungalow, though built high enough to withstand a normal flood, would have been snapped like twigs by the impact of the trees or the force of the water, and building and all torn away in crashing dissolution. In his mad panic to release the dam and save the bridge, he had given no heed to the safety of his wife and child.

With a face of death he ran to a chance dugout that had not been taken by the flood. To hell with the bridge! He sprang in and began paddling furiously.

Aided by the bubbling, yellow current, in five minutes he reached his destination, to find that the flimsy bungalow had been completely swept away. Only a few of the broken stilts remained showing above water, while matted grass around some tree trunks on the bank told him of the height at which the water had passed.

His voice, tense with anguish, called hoarsely to his wife. There was no answer, save for the echo that mocked him from the gloomy forest walls. He paddled on, a vague and desperate hope in his mind that somehow Sheila and the boy had achieved the impossible and, in spite of having no boat, managed to escape.

Soon in the distance he heard the roar of the great main river, Me Yome, which meant that the latter stream also was in flood. The whole waters of heaven had been let loose on this terrible morning.

Bend after bend in the Me Teep flashed by, and finally, when Thornton

realized that all further effort at finding the bodies would be useless, his dugout crashed against a rock while rounding a sharp corner, then turned completely over.

Strong swimmer that he was, he fought to the bank, up which he climbed. There, dripping and choking, he sank down onto his knees and hid face in hands.

That his wife and child were dead was now beyond all doubt. By no conceivable chance could they be alive, for the tearing crash of the bungalow would have killed them before ever the angry water caught them in its arms. And by now the Me Teep would have swirled their bodies far into the raging breast of the flooded Me Yome. Thus was he, James Thornton, the murderer of them both.

He had prayed for rain. The rain had come, saved his bridge, then killed his wife and child. He sprang to his feet and, lifting both arms to the leaden sky, cursed Fate. The fit passed off and, scarce conscious of his actions, he began stumbling along the bank.

Soon the little village, situated at a point where the Me Teep joined the Me Yome, came into view, and the spectacle brought him to his senses. In the wan light the Me Yome was now a band of yellow water, on which trees, cattle, all manner of freight, were drifting down. The rain still peppered over the ever-rising floods; in a few, brief hours the world had turned from a parched, bare wilderness to a network of rushing torrents.

He gazed at the mighty Me Yome beyond the village, and his eyes were hungry. He wanted to swim out and out and out, away into the midst of the waters 'till they took him for all time; life held less promise than death for murderers.

Then, suddenly, he saw that the village was cut off from him and the mainland by a newly formed channel which

ran in a tumbling cascade behind the huts. The Me Teep in its rush had evidently burst into two streams near its mouth, and the village was now isolated on the triangular delta of land thus formed.

He hastened toward the new channel. It was rising rapidly, and soon the whole of the newly made island might be covered, and the village exposed to imminent danger.

Life held some mission for him yet. He plunged into the channel. Though at present only knee deep, its force was such that he was nearly swept off his feet. He gained the island, to see that the inhabitants were gazing out of their attap-roofed shanties with mild interest on their dusky features. Evidently unconscious of their peril, they were making no effort of any kind to move. The village had been safe in previous floods; it would be safe now. Thus reasoned the people, and Thornton, from his long association with natives, knew what was in their minds.

He thought rapidly. Even were there enough boats to evacuate the population, the craft would be swept sideways into the main Me Yome by the spate in the channel. No, the channel must be forded on foot while there still was time, and the aged and infirm carried across by the young and active men.

He ran to several of the houses, warning the inmates of their danger and shouting instructions. Once fully aware of their peril, the inhabitants galvanized into activity. A good third of the menfolk, however, without thought for the safety of their dependents, made a dash for the mainland, where they stood, cowering and shivering, upon the bank.

Thornton cursed them inwardly, then concentrated upon his task. Seizing a couple of naked, brown mites that came running out of one of the huts, he placed them on his shoulders and floun-

dered through the channel, to return a minute later for fresh lives to save.

Time and again he crossed and recrossed the bubbling torrent, which gradually became deeper and more difficult to ford. With him he half carried, half dragged, old men, old women, the lame, the halt and the sick, while the natives who had stood firm also toiled heroically at the rescue work.

Soon Thornton moved as in a dream. Every life saved by him was atonement, however slight, for the two he had murdered. He labored on, a machine of energy that seemed never to tire.

After the tenth crossing, however, from sheer exhaustion he fell semiconscious on the mainland. His head was whirling and black spots were swimming in his eyes, but with a supreme effort of will power he fought to his feet once more.

A confused shouting was going on all round him. One man was yelling words to the effect that the channel was now too deep to ford and that the island itself was submerging. Then another screamed that the inmates of a solitary hut built at the extreme end of the village had only just realized their danger, and that—

Thornton heard no more. Though literally blind with fatigue, he plunged into the torrent, which was now waist deep, and somehow reached the other side. Two brown men, carrying a sick woman, swam into his misty ken. He glanced at the face of the woman, to see the features of the ayah. This, then, had been the village to which she had gone with the fever.

Some one was plucking at his arm. He turned. His wife, carrying the boy, was gazing at him, and the same imploring look was in her eyes as he had seen the previous night.

He was aware of no strangeness in events, for all the world had become a land of dreams. Though his brain no longer worked, his muscles still moved

automatically. With one arm he took the boy, with the other he clasped the waist of his wife.

They entered the flood. It bore them down sidewise, but the man strove like one possessed. Tearing and scrambling with his feet at the shale that slithered past beneath, he strove through the turmoil and reached the mainland at a point where only ten yards separated them from the boiling death of the Me Yome.

And then complete oblivion blotted out the senses of James Thornton.

When he came to, his head was resting on Sheila's lap, and beside him sat the little boy. Thornton gazed up at Sheila wonderingly, then ran his fingers over her soft features. She smiled at him and motioned him to close his eyes.

When he next awoke, the sun was shining. His clothes were dry, and he was lying in the shade of a tree. Under his head was a rough pillow of jungle grass.

He raised himself up on one elbow and glanced round, to see that Sheila was bending over the ayah, who was lying under a second tree.

On seeing him awake, two brown men who were near the group approached him. They salaamed many times, then one of them spoke.

"Lord," said he in Siamese, "we thank you for what the white mistress has done on our behalf."

"My mind is in a mist," replied Thornton in the same language, "and I do not comprehend the meaning of your words."

"The master did not get the mistress' note?"

Thornton shook his head wearily. His brain could fathom nothing.

"Lord, we will explain. We thank you because the white mistress has saved the life of our sister, who is your ayah. Last night, our sister get very

bad with the fever, and we fear she die. We watch over her for many hours, then we decide to go up to your bungalow, for we think you sure to have good medicine. We paddle up, though it three o'clock in the morning when we go. We reach the bungalow, to find you just left for the north. But the mistress, she awake, and, though it very dark and beginning to rain, she not afraid. She leave note for you, then wrap up the little boy, for she wish to take him with her. She bring medicines, then come in our canoe with us to the village."

"Lord," the second brother was speaking, "without the white mistress our sister would indeed have died. But the mistress, she toil hard till dawn and save her. Then we all very weary. We sleep a little, so that we nearly lose our lives by the flood. Even then she make us take our sister first, for she think she can save the boy herself. The mistress is great indeed."

Thornton bowed his head in silence, for Sheila and the child were returning to his side.

A week later Thornton was gazing at the bridge. Behind him a temporary bamboo shelter had been erected by his coolies, for now the water supply everywhere was clean and plentiful. In a smaller hut near by two men awaited

transport to the capital on a serious charge of arson. At the mouth of the Me Teep, three miles distant, some natives were busily engaged in rebuilding their ruined village.

James Thornton stared at the bridge, and a sudden loathing of it assailed him. Why had not it, too, been swept away? He shook his fist at it, then a hand restrained him. Sheila was standing by him, and the little boy plucked at her skirts.

"No, Jim," she said softly, "that won't help."

She pointed away to the north, and her eyes were shining. She drew pictures for her husband. Strange, dusky tribes—Annamites, Shans, Kamoos, Yunnanites—would meet one another for the first time, and, he, James Thornton, would be the cause of it all.

She paused, and the man stooped and lifted the little boy high into the air.

"Sonny," he cried, "I believe the bridge was built for *you* as well as those other fellows!"

But sonny couldn't understand, for he saw only a new father, a father who for some strange reason had recently begun to play games with him and make him lovely bamboo toys. How could *he* know that the bridge had spanned vast distances between, not only dusky tribes, but also the two white human beings who were his parents?

Reginald Campbell has appeared in these pages before, and will, we hope, ... do so again.



GOLF LINKS FOR THE PUBLIC

GOLF is no longer exclusively a rich man's, country-club game. In one hundred and fifty American cities there are now more than two hundred public golf courses where anybody may play for a small fee. In 1927 the three courses in one of these towns netted the municipal treasury a profit exceeding one hundred and thirty thousand dollars. In the same years in the one hundred and fifty cities, the golfers played six million rounds.



"EYES FRONT!"

By
Will
McMorrow

Old Frisky again! And this time the fierce old British drill sergeant disciplines himself!

THEY say, in the ranks of the Windsor Rifles, that "Old Frisky" was afraid of nothing—man, woman, god or devil—that he met in the line of duty. That may or may not be true.

Certain it is that he showed fear of women, for he avoided them where possible—which, perhaps, was not fear either, but the discretion permissible in a soldier faced by overwhelming odds.

It is not what the Windsors mean when they boast of Old Frisky's coolness in danger.

Probably he felt the chill breath of what men call panic once or twice in his long and honorable career. Once, anyway—though it is not clear whether it was man, woman or devil.

You might ask him about it yourself, if you should meet up with him. And meeting him is not difficult. Just a matter of a short tram ride from Victoria Station to the Three Pistol Tavern, hard by the gray walls of Windsor Barracks, far enough away to be out of earshot of the sentry at the gate, but near enough for a man to hear, over his foaming glass, the clear, sweet notes of "Drummer's Call" in the darkness—and forget he is a "damned civilian."

Station yourself in the saloon bar any night before "Last Post" is sounded, and wait, and presently the door will swing back with a slam, and in will stride a fierce and elderly gentleman with a slight halt in his step, and bushy eyebrows, either of which would shame

a subaltern's mustache, and a nose prominent and weathered red, and a gray mustache waxed to needle points, and a leathery neck pressed back tight against his collar, and a silver-headed stick gripped stiffly beneath his right arm—and that will be Old Frisky.

Yes, ask him about panic by all means—and keep your hand on the doorknob!

He was on detached service at the time—drill instructor assigned to teach the rudiments of soldiering to the mechanics at a flying school in the south of France, in the shadow of the Pyrenees in 1918. Probably the powers that control the lives of soldier men sent him there with the idea that it would be a well-earned vacation from the arduous front line, and a vacation for the sore-harried recruits of the Windsor Rifles—and probably they did not intend that he take his duties too seriously. But to Drill Sergeant Frisbie life held no sinecures.

He landed in the headquarters of the air squadron, to which he had been assigned, with the unobtrusive quiet of an exploding bomb. A door slammed, heels clashed sharply together, a silver-headed stick was whisked under a rigid arm, and the adjutant—an easy-going gentleman of the Royal Flying Corps—found himself being glared at, and being stiffly saluted by Old Frisky.

"Drill Sergeant Frisbie, sir, of the Windsor Rifles!" Old Frisky snapped. "Reporting for duty!"

"Ah! Frisbie. Yes. Drill—ah—instructor." The adjutant consulted the paper that had been shoved under his nose. "Jolly fine record here, sergeant. Indian service, Boer War, Queen's South African, Sudan, Boxer Uprising, Distinguished Conduct Medal, Ypres, Loos—very fine. I rather think they've sent us the right man."

"Sir!" Old Frisky roared obediently, frowning at the wall.

The adjutant looked faintly startled.

"The—ah—men of the squadron need perhaps a—bit of stiffening. Squad drill—that sort of thing. They are liable to forget their drill—the fundamentals, as it were—being mechanics. They are inclined to grow more lax and forget discipline."

"Not with me, sir!" Old Frisky's jaws clamped shut and the waxed, gray mustache rose a fraction of an inch toward his weather-reddened nose. "On parade or off, I'll warrant I'll do my duty an' they'll do theirs. I've made soldiers of worse stuff than mechanics, sir."

"Yes—ah—of course," the adjutant said doubtfully. "Right-o."

But after Old Frisky had saluted and wheeled about and snapped that flashing cane beneath his arm and stalked out, the adjutant called up a friend of his on the phone.

"Major Pelleg, of the training squadron, please. Are you there, 'Peg-leg'? I say, you were in the Windsor Rifles—do you remember an old pelican named Frisbie—drill sergeant or sergeant major? Kind of a leathery old chap with an Adam's apple and eyebrows—that sort of thing——"

"Good Lord! You don't mean Old Frisky!"

"No! No! Not Frisky at all. Frisbie. Old-soldier type. The sort of chap that blows through his nose and glares over a chap's head and talks rather deafeningly. They've sent him from up the line to give my mob a bit of drill and discipline. I thought 'perhaps you'd know him.'"

"Know him!" The voice on the wire was emphatic. "He showed me how to drill a platoon when I went to India in '98. Must have come back off the reserve when the war started. Rather oldish chap, what?"

"That's it exactly," the adjutant worried. "He seems a bit ancient to be handling my chaps. You know—bally lot of mechanics and all that, but they

rather fancy themselves as airmen—that kind of rot. Look down on these old army martinets from the line. I wouldn't like to have them rag the old chap too much——"

"Tell you what," the major grunted. "I'll lay ten quid right now that Old Frisky has them eating out of his hand in a fortnight."

"Done! Of course, I shan't encourage any such thing. One must preserve discipline at all hazards. I shall make it easy for him, and if the job is too much for him—— I say, what are you laughing at? I say, are you there——"

He hung up the receiver, frowning at it.

"Silly chap, Peg-leg. Always has some silly joke up his sleeve."

From behind the headquarters hut, a rasping voice did its best to drown out the roar of airplane motors warming up on the field.

"Left, right, left, right! Keep that blarsted step, you swabs! Soldiers! Gawd strike me if I ever seen a lot like you! 'Eads up, you bleedin' camel drivers! You're not in the bloomin' air now—you're on the blurry ground, an' you'll be in the guard room, s'help me!"

Old Frisky hadn't let any grass grow under his feet. He had tumbled his battered but clean-scrubbed pack on a vacant cot in the sergeant major's hut, taken a swift, appraising look into the capacity of the guard room, blasted an indolent sentry to hell for a lazy kitchen swab, and quickly gone to work with a will.

He had to work fast and furiously, for, what with these new-fangled notions that a soldier was also a mechanic, the time devoted to proper drilling was all too short.

Old Frisky had looked through the schedule of duties and discovered, not without a snort of disgust, that there was only one parade a day, the rest of the time being devoted to engine repair,

airplane assembly, and other irrelevancies incidental to a flying school.

When Old Frisky spotted the waiting platoon his mustache bristled.

Up and down, back and forth across the uneven field he chased them, forming fours, turning about, doubling into line, left wheel, right wheel, about turn, without pause or rest, giving them a taste of the discipline that was the lot of the Windsor Rifles, and that these unfortunates had been cheated out of.

"Left—turn! Sharp, now! About—turn! About—turn! Halt! Stand still, now!"

He strode toward the sweating, sullen line, pointed with his silver-headed stick to a slim young man with a small mustache.

"Take that man's name, sergeant, for bein' idle on parade! Wot's yer name?"

"Corporal Bartlett—air craftsman."

"Take 'is bloomin' name again, sergeant, for insubordination an' disrespect!" Old Frisky rasped. "An' when you speak to me, my man, say 'Sir' as called for by regulations. Stand straight now an' eyes front, or I'll 'ave you on bread an' water for duration."

The sergeant, it appeared, did not have his notebook.

"I 'ad no occasion for it, of late," he explained.

"You *will* 'ave," Old Frisky said grimly. "An' if you forget it next parade I'll see that you're blurry well court-martialed for neglect of duty! An' while you're at it, take note of that man on the end of the line. The one with the oil stain on 'is tunic. Put 'im in for comin' on parade in bad order. An' the one next 'im for shave an' general dirtiness!"

By the end of the first week of his assignment, the guard room had been doing a land-office business, and Old Frisky was almost prepared to admit that that particular squadron of mechanics could put up a fair sort of drill

—not to compare with the Windsor Rifles, of course, but fair considering the sort of swabs they were.

That the material he worked in was stubborn and rebellious, only served to challenge Old Frisky to redoubled efforts. The fact that he was looked upon as a tyrannical martinet and cordially hated, did not occur to him—and if it had, it would not have bothered him in the least. In the service of duty he played no favorites and spared himself no more than the others.

"A steady drill," he thundered at the sergeant major, "makes a steady soldier! Discipline! On the bleedin' ground or in the blurry air, it's all one. Mechanics be damned! They're soldiers first. An' a rotten lot of soldiers, too, I'll take my oath! Any damned civvy with the brains of a barrack flea can put together an airplane—aye, an' fly it, too; but it takes years an' sweatin' blood to make a disciplined soldier!"

"Ever been up?" the other inquired. "If you had you would see we have some sort of discipline in the air. A chap can't lose his head there. If he's piloting and he gets panicky, the chap that's with him just slugs him with an extinguisher, and that's that."

"Right enough, too," Old Frisky conceded. "Discipline first an' last. Soldierin'—keepin' yer blurry 'ead abaht you, come what may. A steady drill an' eyes front an' the guard room for the shirker!"

"Best keep both feet on the ground," the sergeant major murmured.

He was thinking of the last drill instructor, who had been assigned to the squadron by a benevolent government. He hadn't lasted long. Started with a roar and a rush like this one, made himself unpopular and had ended meeker than a lamb after foolishly accepting an invitation for an aerial joy ride by a pilot friend of one of the mechanics.

Everything had happened to that sergeant from a flat spin to a triple loop,

including such frightfulness as diving straight at trees and tail spins over cemeteries with the joker at the controls in apparent dismay. That drill instructor had landed a sick and shaken man, and his usefulness as a martinet had ended there with this particular squadron.

For, in the year 1918 flappers and clerks and sweet-faced ladies had not yet taken to the air, and the delusion was fostered that it required a rare and special type of superman to fly an airplane. Even without a pair of wings on his chest, the lowest-ranking mechanic that ever swung a propeller cocked his cap over a superior eye and swaggered among his less-fortunate comrades from the "ditches," basking in the reflected glow of high endeavor.

As Bartlett expressed it: "He may be a drill sergeant and a great man in his own mob, but he's just a foot-slogging Tommy here and a damned ground hugger to boot."

That was the day Bartlett—who, besides having been a superior sort of bank clerk in civil life, was an aviator of sorts—tried his wit on Old Frisky by imitating the latter's accent to the amusement of the squadron.

But Old Frisky, who sensed something wrong, having little humor on parade and none at all where discipline was concerned, sandwiched Bartlett neatly between two men and marched him off; and Bartlett spent a thoughtful night in "cells" until released and reprimanded by the adjutant.

What Bartlett thought during the still watches of the night, concerning the injustice of this treatment of a master air craftsman at the hands of a mere infantry drill sergeant, who dropped his aspirates, he did not say. Like most practical jokers, he was supersensitive when the tables were turned. Also he was inclined to be vindictive.

He appeared before the commanding officer.

"Permission to take a ship off the line, sir?" he asked respectfully.

"Your instructor passed you for solo?"

"Yes, sir. He's on leave right now."

The commanding officer was busy with other matters. He nodded.

"Take one of the old dual controls. We can't afford to lose a good one right now. Right-o. Tell the officer at the 'tee.'"

The upshot of it was that Old Frisky, sitting over his afternoon tot of rum in the sergeant's mess—rum being helpful to the rheumatism contracted in India—with his cap and stick on the table before him and the *London Times*, with its list of killed and wounded Windsor Rifles, held at arm's length, found Bartlett standing by the table.

"The adjutant wishes to know," Bartlett said respectfully, "if you would like the experience of a cross-country flight."

"I don't!" Old Frisky barked harshly. "And stand to attention proper! 'Ead up, like a bloomin' soldier!"

"The adjutant," Bartlett went on, "says he thinks it would be a good thing for you to have some air work, sir."

Old Frisky removed his silver-rimmed spectacles, folded them in their worn case and laid aside the newspaper.

"Why didn't you say it was an order in the first place?" he snapped, reaching for cap and stick. "Lead on, then, an' step out smart!"

They marched across the drill square and out onto the flying field, Old Frisky calling the step in his parade-ground voice. He had no personal malice toward Bartlett, but it was evident that the chap needed a bit of stiffening more than any one else in the squadron, and Old Frisky was not the man to let an occasion like this pass unimproved.

There was only one airplane in that section of the big field. A single mechanic—a pal of Bartlett's—was warm-

ing the engine up. Beyond the broad plain were trees, a few houses, more trees rising in gentle slopes, then the distant purple Pyrenees shadowed in the haze of late afternoon.

Old Frisky seated himself in the rear cockpit of the ship, permitted himself to be buckled in safely, and sat frowning straight ahead, with both feet solidly on the floor and his silver-headed stick across his knees, a leather helmet giving him the look of an ancient and apoplectic Crusader, and his cap—which he refused to surrender—wedged firmly between two flying wires inside the fuselage.

Privately, he considered the whole business nonsensical and unmilitary. But orders were orders and if the commanding officer, through his mouthpiece, the adjutant, required that a drill sergeant should intrust himself to a contraption such as this and go trailing through the clouds like a bleedin' civilian acrobat, that was the adjutant's business.

The idea that he was being made the victim of a practical joke of a rather strenuous variety, did not cross his mind. His back was to the barrack huts, so he could not see the group that were in Bartlett's confidence grinning among themselves.

"Blimy!" The mechanic nudged Bartlett under cover of the fuselage. "If 'e fluffs to the game, mate, 'e will 'ave yer life. When 'e finds out you're doin' this on yer own——"

"No bloomin' fear." Bartlett smiled sourly. "It'll be my word against his, and you all heard him say he wanted to take a flight. It'll do the old blighter good to get the life scared out of him a few times. He won't feel so damned regimental when he gets back. The trouble with these old infantry sweats is they're liable to pick out the wrong man for their discipline—as he calls it—and they need to be taken down a peg. I'll give him the ride of his life."

They roared down the field, bounced, zipped along the top of the grass for a few yards and then zoomed up at a steep angle, clearing the trees at the lower end. Slowly, the altimeter rose to two thousand.

Bartlett kept it there and pointed the nose of the ship toward the mountains. He was not looking for altitude just yet, however dangerous it was to fly at a low level over that broken country. He swept toward a high hill, nosed down and, with the engine idling, shot toward a lonely tree. The wind screamed in the wires as the ship sped toward certain destruction. A few yards from the tree—a few inches it would seem to the inexperienced—he pulled back on the stick and they slid upward.

He looked around, expecting to find his passenger cowering in the cockpit. Old Frisky was sitting very straight and glowering ahead as if hairbreadth escapes were everyday occurrences.

Twice more Bartlett picked out conspicuous objects on the landscape and plunged downward toward them at terrific speed. The second time—it happened to be the rocky face of a precipice—he felt his shoulder tapped by Old Frisky's stick.

The drill sergeant pointed toward the onrushing mountain and turned his eyes back to the horizon again.

"Best keep yer 'ead abaht you, my man!" his voice cut sharply through the scream of wind.

Thereafter Bartlett went through his whole bag of tricks. He knew he was taking chances, over a broken, mountainous country with no possibility of landing safely if anything really went wrong, and with dusk darkening the valleys. But he was on his mettle. They would be waiting back at the field to enjoy the sight of a subdued and frightened ground lubber. To return with this "old sweat"—evidently too stupid to appreciate the dangers of the

air—and have the laugh turned on Bartlett, was more than that individual could stomach.

There is no denying that, for a man with so few air hours, Bartlett gave a promising acrobatic performance. He looped three times in succession, fell off in a spin, straightened out after that breathless whirl and flew upside down for a while, before climbing for another whirling tail spin.

Old Frisky, a bit dizzy from these unaccustomed calisthenics, gripped his stick more tightly in his blue-veined hands. It was evident to him that this swab was having trouble with the airplane; otherwise he would be able to keep it on an even keel. Didn't seem to have any clear and straightforward notion of where he was going, either. Kept shutting on and off the blurry engine like as if he couldn't make up his mind. No damned discipline or order about him. Might 'ave known he'd lose 'is 'ead in an emergency. Bloomin' chap didn't even know 'is drill proper or——

The plane lurched sidewise as Bartlett let it side-slip.

"Steady!" Old Frisky muttered. "Steady all along the——"

Suddenly Bartlett turned a dismayed and frantic face toward his passenger. This was the crowning joke of aerial hazing—to pretend the ship was out of control. It has been said Bartlett was something of a wit; he was also something of an actor.

He threw both hands up, seemed to be grabbing ineffectually for the controls, fear and despair showing in open mouth and staring eyes. The ship straightened a trifle—he was watching the controls carefully enough despite his acting—then started a side-slip in the other direction. Bartlett clutched the sides of the cockpit and seemed to be shouting for help.

By this time his passenger should have been cowering in the rear cockpit,

waiting for the inevitable crash. Bartlett stole a look behind—just in time to dodge the swing of the silver-headed cane that thudded against the leather-padded edge within a couple of inches of Bartlett's head.

Bartlett steadied the ship into a flat glide.

"I say! What the devil——"

"Regulations!" Old Frisky barked, and settled back in his seat, the cane across his knees. "Accordin' to yer own sergeant major! Keep yer 'ead now, my man. Can't 'ave any panic up 'ere—if I 'ave to land this myself! An' say 'sir' when you speak to me, you barrack swab!"

It sobered Bartlett immensely. There was something unconquerably determined about the gleam from beneath those bushy eyebrows, the set of that heavy chin. It occurred to Bartlett with something of a shock that this old sweat meant exactly what he said: that he would avert a "panic" at all costs, and that a certain humorous corporal had been within an ace of being knocked out a thousand feet in the air with an inexperienced old blighter at the controls.

Bartlett did not feel it was an opportune moment to tell this drill sergeant that it had been all a joke. He figured it would be best to call it a day and get back to the field.

He was in the fog before he knew it.

He hadn't noticed the creeping, gray mist. He was not an experienced aerial navigator and he had been busy with other things. It was around him, above, below, ribboning past his surging wing tips, blanketing him completely from sight of the mountainous ground below. He climbed steadily to get above it, emerged into the light of red sunset, and realized that he was lost. There was no compass aboard. There were mountains ahead and mountains behind, and whether the nose of his ship was pointed south through the

Pyrenees to Spain or north to France was six of one and a half dozen of the other as far as Bartlett was concerned.

He had gone ten miles farther—a matter of ten minutes—before he shut down the roar of the motor to explain the situation to Old Frisky.

"Lost! Wot kind of a bleedin' report is that to make? Drop down 'ere, then, an' arsk one of the blasted natives!"

Bartlett's voice came back in snatches on the wind:

"No landing field—mountains—fog may blow away——"

"Carry on!" Old Frisky's stick pointed ahead. "Straight to the front an' we'll see wot comes of it."

Nothing seemed to come of it, for an hour at least. Bartlett climbed to avoid a blur of mountaintop that loomed through the mist. He circled, slid downward on the still air. He had to land now. Darkness was a matter of minutes away, already threatening the valleys below. He had no inclination to find himself out of gas and blown, perhaps, over Biscay's waters.

It was an open meadow that caught his worried, searching eyes—an even-looking, dark valley of grass, bordered with scrubby trees, half hidden in a lake of fog, with a white patch at the farther end.

Bartlett nosed down, dropped quickly and bumped a couple of times rather roughly before the ship teetered to a stop. The white patch dissolved into its component parts—a herd of goats scampering before the advance of the swaying plane.

Bartlett climbed out of the cockpit, looking around. This wasn't at all the way he had expected the hazing trip to end.

Old Frisky doffed his leather helmet for his more usual headgear, whipped the stick beneath his arm and clambered to the ground.

"A bloomin' fine bit of work, this!"

he said sharply. "Comes of not keepin' a level head abaht you. Come 'ere, that man! Smart, now!"

This last was directed at a thin and swarthy man with tousled black hair and a kind of shawl of goatskin wrapped about his skinny shoulders. He leaned against the plane, glancing from beneath his hair from one of the strangers to the other. He mumbled a greeting.

"Wot's the swab talking?" Old Frisky demanded. "Portugee?"

"Spanish, sir." Bartlett had a smattering of tongues. "He says, 'The favor of God on you.' It's a way they have of——"

"Tell 'im to take 'is blasted 'and off that plane!" Old Frisky grated. "It's government property. As dirty a civilian as I've seen in twenty years, an' you can tell 'im that, too. Where does 'e say we are?"

The man muttered an answer to Bartlett's question, but kept his alert eyes on Old Frisky, as if fearful of a sudden attack from this roaring señor in uniform.

"He says we're in the province of Lerida, Spain," Bartlett admitted sulkily. "We're beyond the Pyrenees. The wind must have——"

"None of yer bloomin' excuses!" Old Frisky snapped. "Adjutant will 'ave yer report, an' I'll warrant you'll need an excuse then! Our duty is clear now, an' that is to get out of this country afore they clap us into a civvy jail for internment. Like as not they 'ave no telegraphs 'ere, so we can camp fer the night and 'op it at break of day—— Wot the blurry—halt, that man!"

But the keeper of the goats was a fleeing blur in the dusk, blotted out immediately in the murky masses of banked trees. From beyond the trees a yellow light showed up in the gathering darkness.

Old Frisky frowned. "I'd 've 'eld that damned native, to keep 'im from

givin' the alarm. Won't do to 'ave a 'le, blasted swarm of them 'aving a *dekko* at a couple of British soldiers out of bounds. No 'elp for it. 'Ere! You reconnoiter around where that light is. Likely it's a house. An' don't show yerself unless you 'ave to. Got side arms?"

Bartlett hadn't.

"Take this." Old Frisky jerked from a hip pocket a compact, short-barreled revolver that had once been the property of a German officer. "I'll do sentry 'ere till you get back."

"But that leaves you without——"

"Sharp, now! March off!"

Old Frisky waited in the silence and chill of the meadow, circled by the shadowy battalions of pines and dwarf oak that climbed on either side up the mountainous slopes, black against the sky. In the far end of the meadow the goats were ghostly, white patches rustling amid the stunted shrubs. An owl hooted wailingly in the distance.

An hour later Old Frisky was still waiting. From the direction of the yellow gleam came neither sound nor sign of Bartlett. Old Frisky paced up and down beside the plane—six steps one way, six the other, stopping to listen to the sounds of the night, for a few seconds each turn before resuming his march.

It was growing colder as the night wore on, with the bone-searching clamminess of a Spanish spring, and he could feel the twinges of rheumatism starting.

He suspected that Bartlett was at that moment seated comfortably before a fire somewhere with a glass of warming wine at his elbow; and Old Frisky would have liked to have done the same, even if it were only the red wine that these foreigners miscalled "drink." A nip would take the chill from his stomach. But he had no intention of deserting his post. The goatherd had ap-

parently hidden himself in his own hut, but there might be others in the vicinity—swabs of natives, like that goat chap, with no damned discipline or regard for government property.

As for Bartlett—lazy barrack loafer! Idle on parade and idle off! Scoffin' rations somewhere, like as not, or playin' shut-eye sentry in a hayloft, instead of coming back to make proper report,

He swung about on his heel, marched his six paces, turned—

What was that? It had sounded like a muffled pistol shot, and a scream that had died out as abruptly as it had begun. It might have been the faint, hooting wail of that accursed owl. But the shot! It had come from the direction of the light.

Old Frisky clutched his silver-headed cane beneath his arm and strode across the meadow. In the shadow of the trees he paused again. But there was no other sound. It was as if the shot and cry had marked an end rather than a beginning. He advanced slowly up the slope, in the cavernous obscurity under the pine branches, his heavy ammunition boots sinking noiselessly into the soft, needled soil.

If it hadn't been for the gleam of flickering light that came from a narrow window beneath the eaves, the house with the high, pointed roof would not have been distinguishable from the trees and the overhanging hill behind.

The window was not high but, since the pane was composed of a substance like thin, oiled sheepskin, it was not possible for Old Frisky to see through it. From within the cottage a shrill voice—it might have been a man's or a woman's—seemed to be reciting a hurried tale in the language the goatherd had used.

Old Frisky tried the door, knocked on it with his stick, and the voice inside stopped. He could hear whispering. Then came the sound of a wooden bar

dropping, and he stood aside as the door swung open. A shawled woman who had opened the door surveyed his uniform with lusterless, jet-black eyes set in an ivory face that expressed neither surprise nor alarm.

"Ingles?"

"Aye! A British soldier!" Old Frisky rasped. "Stand aside."

She retreated before him across the hard earth floor toward the red-crackling fireplace that was the room's only illumination. The light of the fire flickered on her high cheek bones and thin lips, and on the figures of two men crouched on three-legged stools close to the warm hearth.

One was the goatherd, with his skin cape and rag-bound legs and eyes gleaming through the shock of tousled hair.

The other's face was in the shadow, a clawlike hand gripping the woolen cape about him. There was a mingled smell of wine and goat and wood smoke in the place.

Old Frisky looked swiftly around. There was only this one room evidently—high-ceilinged with smoke-stained, rough rafters and cross beams, a table with a couple of pewter mugs, a couple of ancient leather chairs, a low bed on the floor in a dark corner, a chest of drawers. It was clear that Bartlett was not in the house.

And there was no place large enough to conceal a man, if Bartlett—as Old Frisky had surmised from that shot—had met with foul play. Perhaps, after all, he had gone farther, seeking more comfortable quarters.

The three by the fire watched Old Frisky intently, silently, with no open menace, but rather a quiet and restrained watchfulness. He wondered how he would make himself understood.

"Where's the other chap?" he demanded of the man in the cloak. "Other *soldado*. Savvy? 'E knows who I mean!" His stick pointed to the goat-

herd. "That 'airy blighter there. Speak up, now!"

The goatherd shook his head.

The man in the woolen cloak seemed to be smiling at some hidden jest. He opened his mouth, but no words issued—only a kind of a clucking sound such as a hen might make. Old Frisky grasped the man's shoulder, and as the latter squirmed and opened the empty cavern of his mouth wider, the drill sergeant stepped away.

"Strike me!" he growled. "Small wonder, then, if 'e can't talk, with 'is tongue cut out. Aye! Mind the wench's orders."

The girl had spoken sharply—not loudly but with a sibilant emphasis that stilled the dumb man's stealthy movement beneath the cloak. The folds had opened a couple of inches with that movement, and, although none of the others had observed it, the sharp eyes of the old drill sergeant had glimpsed what was concealed—the blue gleam of a short-barreled revolver covering him from ambush.

He had seen that revolver before—had handed it, in fact, to Bartlett in the meadow.

The tongueless man smiled again, and remained crouching on the stool, his eyes immovably on Old Frisky, his whole body rigidly tense as if awaiting a signal.

The woman spoke quietly to the man again, then swayed in her voluminous petticoats toward Old Frisky, extending one of the pewter mugs to him.

"See!" she spoke almost caressingly, in throaty English. "There is no other *Ingles*. He came and went again quickly. Who knows where? *Por Dios!* Look thyself, *amigo*. No place is there to hide even a cat in our poor house. And are we not—my man and myself—friends of the *Ingles*?" she finished.

Old Frisky removed his watchful glare from the man by the fire. That

revolver would not seek its target now with the woman between.

The drill sergeant surveyed the dark corners again. Was it possible that Bartlett—idle beggar that he was—had traded the revolver for wine and a night's lodging, and was hiding out? Then, again, this was neutral territory. Bartlett had but to give himself up if he had a mind to, and accept the hospitality of a Spanish interment camp for duration. But that shot—the scream in the night—

Old Frisky's searching eyes—the only part of his rigid body that moved—roved beyond the table, across the bed, upward, stopped for a freezing instant!

He knew, now, where Bartlett was.

Old Frisky had preached and practiced discipline for forty years; disciplining others, disciplining himself most of all; exacting unquestioning obedience from weary legs, sleepless eyes—control—control of mind and body—compelling both to do his will in moments of great emergency, holding them to their duty in the face of death. And never had emergency been sharper or death nearer than there in that hovel.

He was flashing commands now—commands that were issued and answered so swiftly that time was suspended.

"Steady!" he muttered. "Eyes front! About turn—slowly—steady along the line!"

Another man might have let his startled eyes betray him; looked farther up into the dark spaces between the criss-crossed beams; darted a quick and fearful look upward, beyond those ammunition boots that swung limply above his head; might have forgotten, in the shock of that discovery, the sharp eyes that watched and the short-barreled revolver pointed from beneath the woolen cloak. But not Old Frisky.

"You see, *amigo mio*," the woman purred, "there is not here, then, your *soldado*. Wine, *Señor Ingles*, wine—it

makes the blood to be warm. That other one who came and went drank of the wine, too."

Old Frisky had turned again to her, stiffly, with no apparent hurry, jaw clamped shut, gray mustache rigid as steel spikes, deep-set eyes hidden beneath bushy brows and cap visor. The hand that he extended for the spilling mug was steady enough, though his voice was hoarser than usual:

"Aye! He drank it without a doubt—to the blurry dregs."

That was the way of it, no doubt. A few mugs of wine—Bartlett lettin' 'isself be taken unawares, poor lad, with no sentries out and in the enemy country. Chaffin' with the woman, like as not, too, an' her leadin' 'im on. A noose slippin' down from the rafters. Then a quick rush, closin' in from both flanks, an' the pistol going off before the rope tightened. An' now it would be Drill Sergeant Frisbie's turn.

Not right away. The chap in the cloak wouldn't risk missing. A soldier would likely be armed—as the first one was—and the murderin' swabs wouldn't chance that. They would wait for him to call in his sentries, too, feelin' safe an' friendlylike, an' then attack from the rear while he was off guard. Likely they'd have attacked immediately if he'd looked beyond those hanging ammunition boots, and discovered Bartlett's body.

Steady—steady and damned careful! That was the order of the day. Let them think he suspected nothing. Let them think there was a better chance of attack coming later. Get that revolver away from the chap in the cloak—and, above all, no looking up at the dead man overhead, nor at the taut rope tied to a wall bracket in the shadows behind the goatherd.

He lifted the mug.

"Your 'ealth, ma'am," he grated harshly. "I fancy the man I want isn't 'ere after all."

She pointed to one of the leather-hung chairs—one with its back to the fireplace. If she meant for Old Frisky to sit in it by the table, he pretended to misunderstand her.

He laid down the mug and his cane upon the table, picked up the heavy, strongly made chair and advanced toward the wide fireplace, holding it legs forward, in front of his body, as if to take advantage of the warmth of the logs. To drag it across the floor would have been easier, but, held before him, it served to screen him partially.

Both men watched him avidly as he hobbled toward them with the cumbersome piece of furniture. The goatherd scraped his stool backward out of the way to make room on the hearth. Old Frisky studied the distance, timed hand and eye.

One pace—two—three—— The blighter was holdin' 'is fire—uncertain. Four—five!

The chair struck the goatherd with the force of a battering-ram, toppling him from his stool, as Old Frisky hurled himself at the cloaked man. For the space of time it took the woman to scream twice, the two rolled across the floor, enmeshed in the woolen cloak. But for all his age, Old Frisky had not forgotten the rough-and-tumble fighting he had learned in the barracks and bazaars of his youth. He was on his feet first, his iron-shod boot crashing to the man's chin and the hand that held the revolver. He had the weapon in his own hand, swinging it to bear on the woman before she had more than drawn the keen-bladed knife from her bodice.

"Stand still!" he snarled. "Woman or devil—it's all one to me! Raise that 'and an', so 'elp me, I'll billet you in 'ell where you belong! An' that murderin' swine there, too!"

The goatherd had scrambled from beneath the chair, his singed cape filling the hut with a sickly odor of burned

hair. Old Frisky stepped across the unconscious man and jerked the revolver toward the end of the rope fastened to the wall.

"Cut 'im down!" he snapped. "Smart, now! I'll bring 'im off dead or alive, an' the three of you will 'ang if I 'ave to stay 'ere for duration myself!"

"I fancy," said the adjutant over the phone, some days later, "this chap Bartlett was more dead than alive when he hit the floor. It seems they had him suspended by the wrists and gagged. Intended to burn both of them in the plane and claim it landed in flames—or some such beastly business. Bartlett gathered that this tongueless chap had some sort of vendetta against the British—something to do with that missing tongue—or perhaps they were German sympathizers. Lots of that in Spain.

"At any rate, it seems our old chap jolly well did them all in the eye.

Fought all three—left the goat fellow and the dumb chap and the woman, who seems to have been an utterly impossible person, tied to chairs. Got away at dawn. Stirring sort of thing, what? Of course, mum's the word, Peg-leg. Neutral nonsense. No end of complications.

"This Bartlett chap? Owes his life to old Frisbie. Frisbie, you know, wanted to court-martial him. Drinking with civilians, failure to report, disrespect to a warrant officer, and I don't know what all. I had to talk the old fellow out of it. Deafening sort of chap. But Bartlett is in the guard room, anyway. Seems there was a free-for-all fight in town last night with the men of another squadron.

"What? Oh, nothing important. Some strange chap called old Frisbie a martinet—spoke rather harshly, I fancy—and our chaps all piled on him. I say—what on earth are you laughing about?"

Turn to "*A Chat With You*" for information about Will McMorrow's new novel, the feature of the next number.



A WHOLE LOT OF NUTS

THE gray squirrels that inhabit the national capital's parks live the life of Riley.

They toil not, neither do they spin, and they never bother about their rations. Every year the government buys a hundred bushels of peanuts which are fed to the bushy-tailed pets by the police under the department of public buildings and parks.

Late in the evening a policeman strolls through a park, whistles and puts a hand into his pocket. The squirrels know the call and come running. After eating what they want, they scamper off and bury the remaining nuts; but they are fed so plentifully by their guardians and by Washingtonians that they don't even have to remember where they hide the extra provender. Citizens and tourists give them roasted peanuts as a rule, but Uncle Sam has more respect for a squirrel's digestion. The ones he hands out are raw.



JOHN L. TAKES THE CROWN

By William Hemmingway

The authentic and dramatic story of Sullivan's historic battle with Paddy Ryan, at Mississippi City.

AFTER knocking out big John Flood, the Terror of Bull's Head, young John L. Sullivan quite casually embarked on a spree that lasted thirty years. How little did the grateful Boston aldermen, who that night filled his glass with champagne, guess the mischief their gratitude would work!

The raw lad had never seen the stuff before. To him its name had been a mere symbol, vaguely connoting the

richest luxury wealth could buy. Now bumpers of it were poured for him, fitting tribute to his devastating fists. The gemlike brilliance of the golden drink, its swaying spirals of leaping bubbles, its alluring fragrance, pleasant tingling on the palate, fiery exhilaration of the heart—all fascinated the Highlands Strong Boy. Wine, he called it. He knew no other wine. "Give the boys some wine!" he gloriously commanded all the barkeepers.

That long-drawn carouse, without parallel in history, was monstrous in duration, in intensity and in cost. It was amazing in its revelation of Sullivan's superhuman vitality. Other champions who drank soon vanished. Yet for twelve years this demigod disported in a shoreless sea of champagne—and during all that time remained the best fighting man in the world.

Elderly sportsmen with a nice taste in records fly into red-necked rage today if one says Sullivan was champion of the world, protesting that he did not win that title in due technical form. True. But, just the same, he was the best man alive, and for twelve years he hurled back into outer darkness every challenger who dared to face him—and they came from all quarters of the globe, men of all sizes, shapes and colors.

His like had never been seen before, and has never been seen since. Time may bring his equal in destructive power, as it has already brought champions of greater speed, like Corbett, or greater static strength, like Jeffries; but the heart and soul and body that were Sullivan never can be excelled.

Only one fighting man was then more famous than John Flood—Paddy Ryan of Troy, who lately had beaten Joe Goss for the title of national champion; the Ryan who gruffly ordered the boy Sullivan to "go get a reputation" when John offered to box with him. Sullivan knew now that his triumphal march soon would bring him up to Ryan, but he was in no hurry.

Madden piloted him over to Philadelphia, where the manager of a variety theater paid him one hundred and fifty dollars a week to meet all comers. They offered fifty dollars to any man who could stay four rounds in combat with the "Boston Strong Boy," as he now began to be called. Stout longshoremen from the waterside, rugged puddlers from the iron mills, all sorts of ambi-

tious sluggers, tried for the fifty dollars, and all failed. Most of them were put to sleep in the first round, and some lasted less than half a minute.

Madden led Sullivan to Chicago, where he put on a similar program. Two longshoremen who faced him did not last one round between them, and he knocked out James Dalton, skipper of a tugboat, heavier and two inches taller than himself, in four rounds. John was so impressed by the captain's game struggle that he gave him twenty-five dollars by way of consolation.

Jack Burns, famed as the Michigan Giant, came to town to take Sullivan's "easy fifty dollars," as he called it. He was a burly, big-muscled fellow, and as he looked down on Sullivan from his threatening height he exclaimed: "I hate to hit him; he's too little."

"All right. Come on down!" Sullivan replied, driving his left fist deep into the giant's midst, and then, as he bent over, crashed a right swing on the chin that catapulted the unconscious victim* over the footlights and landed him in the second row of orchestra chairs.

Chicago hailed Sullivan as the greatest man of fists in America. The newspapers spread his fame throughout the land. Mr. Fox, owner and editor of the important sporting paper, felt that the time had come to put down this young upstart who had refused to koto to him that night when he had knocked out Steve Taylor at Harry Hill's resort. He offered to back champion Ryan with ten thousand dollars against the Boston boy.

John's friend, Jim Keenan, telegraphed the news to Madden, who at once started East with Sullivan. Among the fight clan gathered at Harry Hill's were several Bostonians who had won big bets on the Flood battle, and when Fox saw how eager they were to back Sullivan again, he was quite willing to reduce his stake to two thousand five

hundred dollars. So the articles were signed for a battle near New Orleans, February 7, 1882, and Ryan went into training at Far Rockaway, Long Island, while Sullivan rested a while at home, jogged on the roads around Roxbury, and went South late in November.

Men had fought for the championship of America quite often in the years preceding, and few outside of the "fancy," as the connoisseurs were called, paid any attention to them; but this fight aroused the country. Myths and legends about Sullivan grew day by day: he could tear a horseshoe apart with his bare hands, like Marshal Saxe, or bend a silver dollar between thumb and fingers; the men he knocked out stayed out for hours; he never dared to hit with all his might for fear of killing his victim, et cetera. Newspapers vied with one another in telling weird tales of his frightful strength.

His fame swirled over the American continent like a vast cloud of lurid hues, pierced now and then by the lightning flashes of his fists. A gentle Boston editor admitted, not without embarrassment, that his young fellow citizen seemed to be the reincarnation of Siva, the Destroyer. He was.

Many citizens of Louisiana were so horrified at the prospect of a prize fight in their State that they deluged Governor McHenry with protests, and he proclaimed that he would not permit it there. The pugilists crossed the line into Mississippi and continued their training.

Visitors from the North, including a few from Europe, poured into New Orleans during the last weeks before the fight. The lobbies of that ancient granite pile, the St. Charles, and of other hotels, swarmed with strangers, who wore diamonds, took many drinks; and spoke an outlandish language of their own about "leads, crosses, jabs, jolts, swings and smashes," most confusing to the elegant creoles, mean-

while betting their money in great, green wads.

Other visitors who slipped into town, unnoticed by the average citizen but eagerly scrutinized by the police, were a mob of burglars, thugs and pickpockets from Chicago, New York, Boston and Philadelphia. They were so annoyed by the intrusion of the detectives on their peaceful holiday that they sent their representative to the chief of police with the promise that they would "not work the town if the cops would lay off them." The chief took the boys at their word, and both sides lived up to their gentlemen's agreement.

Champion Ryan boxed an exhibition in Exposition Hall, New Orleans, a few evenings before the battle, with his aids, Professor Perkins and Charley McDonald, champion of Canada. The critics declared Paddy in fine form and abounding health, with the grace of Apollo, the strength of Hercules, et cetera. His speed, his timing, judgment of pace—of everything a champion should know—all were in perfection.

Next evening the Boston Strong Boy sparred with Joe Goss in the same place, before a scant seven hundred spectators. (What stadium could hold the crowd to see that show to-day?) The same critics who praised the champion found that Sullivan was quite out of the hunt as a boxer; he shut his eyes when he hit, ducked too low to avoid blows, and left undone those things he ought to have done—possibly to conceal his real powers. But he could not hide his physical perfection. The *Sun* reporter wrote:

The muscles of his shoulders work like piston rods; his arms are firm as steel, his chest has dropped all superfluous flesh and is as compact as a rampart.

Came, if I may say so, the dawn of the battle day. At five five a. m. the first train left the Canal Street station

in New Orleans with twelve hundred passengers, including the visiting notables from the North down to the last little pickpocket, all packed together into twelve cars as peacefully as so many millennial lions and lambs.

Governor Lowrey of Mississippi had warned sheriffs of all neighboring counties to be on guard against fighters; so some of the visitors were downcast, while others grinned and uttered these mysterious words: "The sheriff's been stiffened."

The special train stopped at Mississippi City, a pretty little fishing village on the Gulf of Mexico, in mid-forenoon, and two more trains soon followed.

Five thousand men stretched themselves after the long and dusty railroad ride and sought refreshing juleps in the Barnes Hotel, a charming, white, wooden structure that sprawled on a high, grassy bank looking out upon the turquoise-blue waters of the unruffled Gulf. The sun was shining brilliantly, and the air was mild as May. The battle ground was framed in a garden of greensward, shrubs and moss-draped oaks.

Two assistant professors drove eight stout stakes in the turfy lawn and rove upon them two half-inch ropes to inclose a "ring" twenty-four feet square. They roped off another inclosure two yards outside of this, into which the more luxurious spectators penetrated after paying two dollars apiece.

Let us hasten to the next scene, and forget this depressing spectacle—only a mere two dollars for ringside places at the battle of the century! The long, well-shaded balconies of the hotel—galleries, they were called—were crowded with legislators, judges and wealthy planters from many miles around, and among them were sweet-faced ladies of the first families, languidly waving their fans and chatting about everything under the sun but the fight.

Where, meanwhile, was the sheriff, especially warned by the governor to be on his guard and to shoot, if he must, to prevent the fight? Why, a miserly hunk of a judgment creditor, armed with an order of the court, had lured the honest sheriff, only two hours ago, away over yonder to Biloxi to dispossess a widow whose mortgage had been foreclosed. Yes, sir, it certainly was mysterious, but that's what happened.

After much wrangling and pleading before the bar—of the Barnes Hotel—two referees were chosen, Colonel Alexander Brewster of Mississippi and Mr. Jack Hardy, a racing gentleman. Harry Hill, proud of his importance as a stakeholder, joined them in the ring.

There was some confusion when Paddy Ryan's manager cried out that he had been robbed of six hundred dollars. A sophisticated rhetorician among the gang of Northern crooks, arguing that his promise "not to work the town" applied only to New Orleans and was not binding in Mississippi City, had incontinently picked his pocket. Many of his colleagues expressed displeasure with the fellow, arguing that he had violated a gentlemen's agreement, at least in spirit—but neither the "dip" nor the six hundred dollars could be found. Any pickpocket who should try such a trick at the ringside to-day would find himself on the way to State's prison before he was halfway through the job.

Burly Joe Goss, with a jaunty little cap surmounting his knobby head, suddenly appeared in the ring at eleven forty o'clock, and the crowd hove a sigh of relief; for everybody knew he was one of Sullivan's seconds. Almost on his heels the Boston Strong Boy swaggered in, a coat thrown over his shoulders, nodding and smiling to the greetings of friends here and there, but quite unnoticed by the crowd. His small feet spurned the turf as he

paraded to his corner in the shade of a little tree and sat among his partisans, talking unconcernedly with Billy Madden and Arthur Chambers, retired lightweight champion, who had spent anxious weeks watching the youth and strengthening his resolution to let the champagne alone while in training.

There followed a long delay. Ryan was employing the usual tactics of a champion—keeping the challenger waiting and worrying before the ordeal. But this challenger seemed not to have a worry in the world. He smiled grim approval when “Red” Leary, a New Yorker with an irregular interest in banking, shouted an offer to bet one hundred dollars to eighty dollars on him, and as soon as his money was covered in Harry Hill’s hands, repeated the offer and kept repeating it until no more dared to take him up.

Now, Paddy Ryan, followed by Johnny Roche and Charley McDonald, forged through the crowd, announced by a spattering of applauding hands and some cheering. More than six feet in height, of harmonious proportions and smoothly muscled, Ryan looked every inch the champion. He politely walked over to the challenger’s corner and held out his hand. Sullivan stood up, grasped it with a wrench that made Paddy wince, and rumbled, “How are you? How’s the health?” in tones that rolled through the air like the diapason of a rich organ. Then Sullivan took ten one-hundred-dollar bills out of his coat pocket and said: “Here’s a thousand says I’ll lick you!” Ryan tried a smile, drew one thousand dollars from his coat, and both handed their money to Harry Hill.

The men threw off the coats that covered their shoulders, and stood face to face before the referees, stripped to the waist. Tall as he was, Ryan looked boyish beside his brawny antagonist, whose massive, sloping shoulders, thick torso and powerful arms and legs

might have served as model for the statue of a Roman gladiator.

Ryan’s cheeks were pink, his neck and hands tanned by the semitropic sun, but the rest of him was fair as a form of marble.

Sullivan seemed molded in living bronze, a tinge of red glowing in his cheeks, but with arms and torso swarthy from long exposure to the vivid light. He weighed 185 pounds, against Ryan’s 195, and his measurements were: chest, 43½ inches; biceps, 16 inches; waist, 37 inches; hips, 42½; thighs, 25; calf, 16½ inches. The men wore snug-fitting trunks that were gathered in broad, smooth bands below the knees. Their light fighting shoes of black leather, high-laced like buskins, were without heels and reinforced with a short spike under the ball of each foot to prevent slipping on the smooth turf.

After the formal handshake—ancient custom of the ring to indicate the entire absence of ill feeling—the men retired to their corners. Champion Ryan now met for the first time the concentrated glare of Sullivan’s dark fighting scowl, and he seemed disconcerted. He looked anywhere but at the youngster.

The Strong Boy gazed across at his opponent with the expression of a starving tiger facing a well-muscled bull. The hum of talk ceased. No one in the crowd seemed to breathe. The reef-points slatting on the sail of an idle sloop just off the beach rattled like a volley in the sudden stillness.

Referee Hardy called “Time!” and clapped his hands. Ryan came out of his corner, watchful, with mincing steps, ready to charge or to fly if need be. He knew he was in danger. Sullivan advanced slowly, studying his man and holding both arms well out in front of his chest, in a style different from anything ever before seen.

Ryan’s pose was orthodox, the right arm well up on guard across the chest,

ready to fly up and shield his jaw, and the left thrust far forward, flicking out and back in little feinting blows calculated to draw the enemy into useless attack or to provoke a foolish counter blow, which he could evade, then in turn attack. But Sullivan would not be drawn; just stood on guard and intently studied every move made by the champion.

Ryan danced in and out of hitting distance twice, seeking to gauge Sullivan's reach. As he came in the third time, Sullivan let drive his left fist hard and straight on the mouth, instantly followed by his right, which shot like a cannon ball on the jaw.

Ryan's shoulders were the first part of him to hit the ground, and his body and legs soggily followed, as if animation had left them. He lay inert; blood came from his mouth, and as his seconds picked him up to help him to his corner they, as well as the rest of the crowd heard Joe Goss' roar of joy: "First blood and first knock-down for Sullivan—and all in one bloomin' punch!"

It was simply incredible. Another voice called out: "Only thirty-five seconds this round!" That was incredible, too; for the first round of the late championship fight in Canada was still fresh in men's minds, the round in which for forty-seven weary minutes crafty Jem Mace "offered the head" to Joe Coburn, hoping he would hit it and crack his knuckles. That round was a classic study in defense. Ryan's first round, too, in winning the title from Joe Goss, was long drawn out. The Boston Strong Boy had upset custom and tossed aside traditions by dashing into such swift and deadly execution. He was there to destroy the enemy, not to defend himself.

"A hundred to fifty on Sullivan!" yelled scores of men, as Referee Hardy at the end of half a minute called "Time!" for the second round. Not

one offer was taken. The crowd was dumb from shock.

"Sullivan arose looking like a demon," is the account given by an ancient chronicler. As the Strong Boy leaped in, chopping with his left and swinging his right fist, Ryan ducked under the swing, side-stepped and ran away, looking frightened as the fist whizzed close to his skull. Sullivan dashed in again and shot his right straight on the cheek bone, so hard that Ryan's head bent far toward his right shoulder.

The champion saved himself from a fall by clinching, and as Sullivan tried to wrench himself loose, Ryan stepped close, slipped his right foot behind the Strong Boy's heel and threw him with a cross-buttock hold. Sullivan's feet flew high as he hit the turf, but he dragged Ryan down beside him in what the wise men called a "dog fall." Sullivan was first to rise, and he laughed as he walked to his corner. The fall had enraged him, not hurt him. Time of the second round was clocked at exactly one minute.

Perkins and McDonald worked hard to refresh Ryan as he sat in his corner in a common kitchen chair—an innovation on the old ring custom of sitting on the knee of a second. They frantically dragged his belt loose so that he could draw deep breaths, and massaged his neck to offset the effect of the blows it had suffered. They talked to Paddy very earnestly, too, probably telling him that it was up to him as champion to make the pace, not play second fiddle to the challenger.

So at the call to the third round Ryan hustled into close quarters and landed a right hook on Sullivan's left eye, which swelled and darkened a little, though Sullivan's right counter jarred Ryan and cut a deep gash in the side of his nose. Somewhat encouraged by the exchange, Paddy drove a straight right on Sullivan's left ear, but the

Strong Boy, countered with another cannon-ball right on the mouth.

It is not enough to say that the blow knocked Ryan down. It struck him down as a swift ball crashes a tenpin. His head and shoulders struck the ground with an impact which seemed to drive him deep into the turf. He was limp and weak as his seconds picked him up and carried him back to his corner, and a red stream was coming from his mouth. Time of round, forty seconds.

Sullivan was knocking the traditions of the ring into a cocked hat. He was a bold revolutionist. Already he had won three rounds of a whirlwind battle such as none of the veterans at the ring-side had ever seen, springing a reckless attack that dropped the champion half conscious on the turf every time—and the whole three rounds, including the half-minute rest after each, had taken little more than two minutes. In that space of time a master of the old school would not have finished the cautious fibbing and fiddling process of measuring a foeman's timing and distance.

The Strong Boy's rush to begin the fourth round drove the champion before him like a leaf in a gale, neither his greater weight nor his height availing to check Sullivan for a moment. At the ropes Ryan held him for a second, then broke away and, skipping nimbly backward, managed to evade his next rush.

Sullivan's attack never ceased, and one of his right swings banged Ryan up against the ropes. Ryan jumped away, clinched with Sullivan, hit once or twice in the clinch, then wrestled the youth to the ground. Sullivan had been taught to wrestle, but he seemed to pay no attention to trying for a fall, pouring all his energy into his blows. The fall to earth did not affect him, for he was up instantly. This round lasted forty-five seconds.

It was amazing, as the fifth round began, to see the champion of America running away as fast as he could from the challenger, who tore after him, swinging left and right, volley after volley. In this way they twice circled the ring; then, as Ryan turned away from the ropes, Sullivan caught him around the waist, raised him high and dashed him to earth in a grand slam that must have driven out the last of his breath. Time of round, forty-three seconds.

Madden saw, as he told me later, that Sullivan had lost the dazzling speed which had enabled him to beat John Flood so quickly that night on the barge—a few months before. The hundreds of bottles of champagne Sullivan consumed since then not only had made him fat—think of his waist after training: thirty-seven inches as he fought!—but had worked such a change in his heart and in his nerves that, even under the stimulus of fury, he could not drive his energies at their old rate of speed.

During the preparation for this championship fight, of course, he had not touched champagne, but its effects lingered in his system and slowed him down. Hard work on the road had burned off much of the champagne-fat, but it had not reawakened the old, fiery energy.

He was not aware of this change in his physical and nervous condition. All he knew was that, for some unknown reason, Paddy Ryan was escaping destruction longer than his earlier victims. Perhaps he could run and dodge faster because he was champion, but, whatever he was, Sullivan determined to finish him offhand.

"You'd better take it easy for a round or two," Billy Madden advised in the fifth resting spell. "Don't chase him so hard. Save your wind; you'll need it."

"Save nothing," Sullivan growled. "I'll out him this round!"

"You want to look out you don't kill him," Madden warned. "He's done now."

"Oh, he'll be all right after a while," laughed the Strong Boy. "I'll only out him—I won't hurt him."

Ryan contributed to the safety-first program by skipping out of harm's way when he answered the call for the sixth round. Certainly he must have trained faithfully for this battle; for his recuperation after fighting at so fast a pace and receiving such ferocious punishment proved that he was in wonderful condition.

By side-stepping Sullivan's rushes, ducking under his right swings, clinching and plain running away, the champion managed to postpone the inevitable for almost one full minute of this round; but at the end of fifty-seven seconds Sullivan's right fist landed on Paddy's neck and sent him down on his knees.

One half-minute rest did wonders for Ryan; for he actually took the aggressive at the opening of the seventh round. One cannot help speculate on how he would have fared if he had gone into the fray like Sullivan, believing that he could beat any man ever born. For the moment he was the aggressor; met Sullivan's rush with a rush of his own, and landed his left and right, though lightly, on Sullivan's eyes.

But there remained always the chief obstacle to his success—his lack of abounding faith in himself. He wrote to his wife on the eve of battle: "I think I'll come out of this all right." That was his unconscious confession of uncertainty. This element of doubt appears all through the battle, from the first moment when he let Sullivan out-stare him.

And now, after making his attack and showing that he really could hit the Boston Strong Boy, though without much effect, he grappled him in a hopeless clinch, confused and half blind

from a cut over his eye. Sullivan promptly threw him on the ground. Time of round, fifty-three seconds.

Ryan tried as best he could to gather strength to meet the relentless attack. He seemed weak as he came out for the eighth round, and as Sullivan charged he fled aside and kept away for a few seconds; but the destroyer soon caught him and drove him clear across the ring under a hot fire of short, straight blows to the ribs.

As Ryan's body struck the ropes, Sullivan bent him far over backward, but let go at the referee's command. As Sullivan stood clear, Ryan took an unsteady step forward, let drive a left lead, and fell on his right knee from weakness and the impetus of his own blow. He balanced himself with his right hand on the grass.

Sullivan waited until he arose and hurried into a clinch; then easily threw him, not falling on him, as he easily might have done under the London prize-ring rules, which would have hastened his finish, but mercifully falling beside him. Such magnanimity was often found in Sullivan. A fiercer tiger never charged to sweep away his enemy with one lightning stroke of his paw; yet, let the enemy be in distress, Sullivan would spare him all he could.

When you consider that Ryan lacked the overweening self-confidence which made fighting a joy to Sullivan, that overtone of fury which makes the warrior proof against hard knocks and fires his destructive spirit, it is astonishing to find him taking the lead in the ninth round. Purely as a matter of dogged courage, hopeless and forlorn but determined to seize this last chance for victory, the sorely battered champion, his head throbbing from many blows, his throat raw as he gasped for breath, his sides aching from many a savage jolt, forced himself to spring out in a furious attack. He took Sullivan by surprise, and drove home his right

on his swollen eye before the Strong Boy quite caught his balance and began to hit back with short body blows in a fierce mix-up.

Ryan flew past Sullivan in his impetuous attack, turned and swung his right fist with all the force he had left on the back of the Strong Boy's head. The blow drove Sullivan forward two or three short steps, and as he caught himself he shook his head to clear away the stars that dazzled his eyes. He was half dazed for a matter of a second or two.

"Now you got him, Paddy! Out him, Paddy!" rang out from all sides of the ring, as for the first time since the combat began Ryan seemed to be in the lead—for it was only seeming. The hostile yells stimulated Sullivan, stopped the buzzing in his head, brought him suddenly back to where he was and what he was doing. He grinned as he turned and faced Ryan, and the force of his scowling glare alone would have stopped most men in their tracks. But Ryan, keenly set on his last chance for victory, came on with a rush. He let go a straight left drive for Sullivan's chin.

Sullivan, as the blow started, swung his thick right arm with the swift, easy motion that Babe Ruth nowadays imparts to a baseball bat. The movement was so smooth and even that it appeared almost to be without effort, but the speed of it was too fast for eye to follow. Long before Ryan's left drive got halfway to its mark, the bony edge of Sullivan's right forearm crashed on Ryan's neck at a point just below the left ear.

The champion's head and shoulder hit the ground six feet away, and the rest of him followed. A shudder ran through the great body, with its high-arched chest and mighty arms; then it sprawled on its back, an inert mass. A gasp of astonishment rose from the crowd—one gasp, no more.

Perkins and McDonald ran in and gathered up their champion, carried him to his chair in the corner, and used all their arts to revive him. Very slowly his eyelids began to flicker. Sullivan strolled to his corner, but disdained to sit at rest. He stood on swift feet awaiting the call, amid silence so profound that a whisper would have echoed in it. Frantically the seconds rubbed ice on the back of Ryan's neck, held the ammonia bottle under his nostrils, tried in vain to force a sip of brandy down his constricted throat. His big frame swayed from side to side as if the skeleton of it were made of rubber; yet with each fleeting moment there came a look of growing determination in his eyes.

"Time!" called Referee Hardy, and clapped his hands. Ryan arose, head erect, arms in correct fighting pose, and stepped on leaden feet out of his corner. He had not regained consciousness by a long way, yet his fighting heart rose above all the punishment that weakened it—and the more deadening burden of its own doubts. The champion's eyes were almost without speculation, yet he drove himself forward to the attack, legs trembling, steps uncertain, but fists threatening.

Sullivan, after his first instinctive advance, stood still and watched the enemy. His ferocious glare was gone; in its place came sympathy and pity. From the five thousand spectators not a trace of sound arose. Ryan stepped forward, left foot out, the right following near it; left foot advanced again, and so on; but before he had taken six steps a yellow sponge was tossed up from his corner and flew, dripping, over his head and rolled on the torn turf before him. Surrender.

The seconds took each an arm of poor Paddy, led him back to his chair and again held the ammonia to his nostrils. As he breathed deeper his eyes regained expression. He turned his

blue-knobbed face toward McDonald and asked:

"Charley, where did that telegraph pole come from that dropped on my neck?"

"That was Sullivan's right," honest Charley replied. Ryan looked at him in doubt. But more proof was at hand. John L. strode to his corner and took his hand.

"A good fight, Paddy," he said. "I wish you the best of luck."

With that he ran back to his own corner, touched the top rope lightly, vaulted out of the ring, and ran to his training quarters, three hundred yards away, at a lively sprinting pace, laughing as he ran. When his seconds, backers and friends arrived, minutes behind him, they found him stretched out in luxury on the rub-down couch, laughing his delight as he savored his new title—champion of America. The best man in the western world! Best man, able man, king, canning, man who can, as Auld Tammias says. John relished his title.

Ryan spoke without reserve after he recovered from the shock of that last blow.

"Nature has not made me for this business," he frankly admitted, "but Sullivan is a natural-born fighter."

The doctors who patched up Paddy's bruised frame and swollen head advised him to quit pugilism, and he said he would. Next day he was well enough to flee to Pass Christian, there to escape the vigilance of the Mississippi City sheriff, who in some mysterious way had heard of the fight and thought he ought to arrest somebody.

Ryan spent the day in bed, and next morning went to New Orleans, where Sullivan entertained him at a little party at which twenty-eight bottles of champagne were consumed in little more than one hour. Then Sullivan started with Madden, Goss and "Parson" Davies for Chicago, to give more exhibitions of his new knock-out art—also to drink up a flood of champagne and hasten down the road to destruction.

Thousands of men and boys gathered at every railroad station to cheer the new wonder and to get a glimpse of him if possible. The theaters in which he performed his magic feats of destruction were packed every night, and a stream of dollars flowed constantly into his hands—no; not into, but through his hands; for he spent it prodigally on his glittering royal wine and gave it freely to every one who asked.

Annoyed by scores of shiftily challengers, he published a standing offer to fight any man in the world for five thousand dollars a side, on these terms: "I to use gloves, and he, if he pleases, to fight with the bare knuckles. I will not fight again with the bare knuckles, as I do not wish to put myself in a position amenable to the law. My money is always ready, so I want these fellows to put up or shut up."

Thus dawned the new era in pugilism. Prize fighting became obsolete, and glove battles, under Marquis of Queensbury rules, took its place. In the century and more since the game began, Sullivan was the first to make a radical change—and he changed it for all time.

William Hemmingway is a regular contributor to these pages.



THE BEST RECOMMENDATION

BUSINESS men who refuse to employ ex-soldiers surely forget what fine service they gave their former employer—Uncle Sam.



THE MODERN VIGILANTES

By Henry C. Rowland

In Five Parts—Part IV

Hugh Hastings, criminal lawyer, accused by overwhelming evidence of murdering Hiram Jones, prosecutor, flees and is protected by Clamart, officer in a secret group of wealthy modern vigilantes, who Hugh sees execute one Andreas Johnson, a criminal Hugh thinks guilty of murdering Jones. Clamart disguises Hugh as an Argentine, Louis Pilar, and sends him as secretary to Judge Fairbanks, vigilante chief, at the Fairbanks' shore home, where Hugh is attracted to Jasmine, the judge's granddaughter. The vigilantes abduct a big criminal, the Duke, who has a house in the neighborhood. Hugh then goes to the house and makes friends with the Duke's half sister, Kathé. Hugh now is sure that Jones was murdered by Lefty, a member of the Duke's gang, and convinces Kathé, who then, because she is sure her brother has been executed and she is strongly attracted to Hugh, tells the police that she knows that Lefty killed Hiram Jones. Then Hugh, who has been hiding offshore in the Duke's boat, gets Hardy, Fairbanks' chauffeur, to bring him some fresh skin and hair dye for disguise, and heads back for the Fairbanks mansion.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTENTIONAL COLLISION.

THE *Gull* was well out in the Sound and the southwest breeze had freshened. As the engine looked to Hugh as if it had scarcely been run at all, he let it turn easily at little more than half speed, glancing at

the oil gauge to see that the circulation was ample. It was possible, he thought, that with luck the boat might have work to do that night.

There were few yachts on this home of pleasure craft that six weeks later would be so widely sown with them. Here and there at a considerable distance a splash of white showed some

small sailer being tried out before going into commission, and to the westward a big palatial cabin cruiser up from Florida was wending her way to the east, for her summer home. A huge Fall River passenger boat gleamed a snowy mass as she swept down on her evening run.

Then Hugh saw, heading out toward him from the mouth of the bay that he had left, what he took at first to be a small coast-guard patrol boat from her type and light-gray color and the speed at which she was proceeding. Here might be those friends of good citizens and enemies to bad, which the police ought to be, already in quest of the *Gull*. If so, the fact that she was heading straight back for her moorings ought to be a point in his favor, provided he could back it up with something equally plausible as to legitimate intention.

He decided that the best he could say would be that he had met Mr. Ormsby on the beach the night before, made acquaintance with him, and that this gentleman on learning that he was something of a motor expert had asked him to try out his new boat, and given him the keys. If further questioned, Hugh decided that he might as well admit his identity and state that he had suspected Ormsby of being the Duke, and the murderer of Hiram Jones, and that he had discovered where he was located and come there in an effort to investigate him. He would say nothing of his employment with Judge Fairbanks, nor refer to Frank Clamart.

Then, as the boat drew closer, he discovered that it was not an official craft, but presumably a private one. She altered her course a little, to pass by a fairly wide berth. As she drew abeam, Hugh saw that there were three men in the cockpit, and that one of the men was Doc.

At the same moment, Doc evidently recognized the boat, which he had not previously done. Perhaps also he rec-

ognized the light, loud pattern of the clothes and the big golf cap, like a yellow toadstool, while Hugh's dark complexion may not have been perceptible under the shadow of the awning with the cap visor drawn down to shield his face. Doc shouted something and waved, then reached for the control and slowed down. He was plainly under strong excitement, believing Hugh to be the Duke and reasoning that in some mysterious way he must have escaped his captors and managed to get aboard the *Gull*.

Hugh realized instantly that this meeting a couple of miles offshore might be far worse than if, as he had half expected, the boat was full of police. He doubted that any disguise, however good, would escape the keen scrutiny of Doc, especially as the man had watched him so closely only a few hours before. Doc and Lefty had been none too sure about him then. They could not have failed to note the power that must lie in Hugh's broad, heavy shoulders, big arms and deep chest. Later, they must have examined the bodies of their two watchers to discover how they had been killed, when the pocket torch would have shown that this must have been done by a terrific blow of the fist from a man of uncommon strength and knowledge of how to strike. It would need but a glance at Hugh's bruised and swollen knuckles to condemn him.

He was unarmed, and it was plainly evident that the *Gull* was no match in speed for this other boat. Hugh had heard her deep-toned, powerful engine the night before, and observed now the speed with which she had approached. He would be unable to get away from her. She could overhaul him in a furlong. At close quarters, he thought that he could easily outmaneuver her, the *Gull* being shorter, lighter and quicker to turn or to go ahead or astern. But once it was discovered that he was not the Duke, any effort at evasion would

bring their fire, and he could not hope to keep far enough away to avoid being shot down at the wheel.

In a crisis of this sort the odds are with the quick thinker who does not shirk a swift offensive. Hugh was a boatman, more than that a sailor, by training and experience. As a boy he had made voyages on vessels commanded and partly owned by his father, and he had always been 'longshore, first with native boatmen, later with those of the Jersey coast. His instinct and control of such a modern, handy and responsive toy as this now under him was like that of a trick cavalry rider for his horse.

There was, he instantly perceived, but one way out of this jam, and it would have to be taken quickly, skillfully and with exactitude. As the longer boat slowed down and now started to make her turn, Hugh brought the *Gull* nearly to a stop, then, with the helm hard over, jumped her ahead. The little boat spun on her heel, getting about far more quickly than if turned when in speed, and what was even more important, holding her position. The other boat had turned to starboard, and Hugh turned to port, which gave him more room and a better angle for his maneuver.

Before Doc had got his longer and deeper-drafted speed boat halfway round, in a wide circle, Hugh had pivoted in an arc enough to head at right angles to her long axis, and by describing a slight arc he could maintain this position. To do his job effectively and without serious damage to himself, it was necessary to run Doc's craft, of which he now discovered the name to be *Loon*, at less than a right angle to her after part. Otherwise there would be danger of tearing off the *Gull's* bows from the forward momentum of the *Loon*. But striking at from sixty to eighty degrees to the long axis carried aft, the *Loon* must not only immediately

clear the striking *Gull*, but haul quickly away from her before she lost her way. With three armed men in her cockpit, this detail was important.

The little *Gull* dived gamely ahead, the combination of light construction and full power designed to haul her over Florida sand banks making her as quick as a polo pony to get away from a standstill. Hugh had realized from the start that he had three separate and vital efforts to think of simultaneously. He must strike hard enough to tear a hole in the *Loon* to sink her quickly, yet not so hard as to crumple in his own bows and sink himself. He must do this and get clear before the men in the other boat discovered the mistake in his identity, and shot and killed him. And he must have distance enough after ramming to make a dash in the opposite direction to the *Loon's* course, which would be straight out across the Sound, so that they would not have time to turn and overtake him before their safety demanded that they abandon ship in their dinghy, which was swung in on davits amidships.

He pulled lower the visor of the big cap and crouched down behind the break of the *Gull's* trunk cabin, so that he could barely see over its top. The best place to deliver the death blow seemed to be just forward of the *Loon's* beam. He darted at her, giving his little craft the limit of its power.

Doc, at the wheel, glanced back over his shoulder and promptly realized the danger of collision, though not suspecting that such was the intention. He shouted, and made a violent gesture with his arm, waving the *Gull* away. Then, as Hugh bore down on him without changing his direction or slackening his speed, Doc started to put his wheel hard over to port, to avoid what still seemed to him the recklessness and bad handling of his supposed chief. The two men with him, neither of whom Hugh recognized, appeared to be dazed.

Twenty yards from the *Loon*, Hugh went into neutral, then on the verge of striking he threw the propeller hard into reverse. There was a splintering crash, a sudden check to the *Gull's* headway, while the other boat heeled sharply, throwing the men in her cockpit off their balance. Hugh ducked down into the cabin like a fiddler crab into its hole. With his propeller grinding hard astern he did not need to remain at the wheel. The one great danger now was that as the speed of both boats was checked nearly to the loss of headway, the men in the cockpit of the *Loon* might clamber aboard the *Gull*. Doc at least, a quick thinker, could scarcely help but realize by this time that the collision was not an accident, even though the Duke were at the *Gull's* wheel.

Hugh, just under the hatch, waited to receive any who might be quick enough of wit to board him. He was barehanded. There had not been time enough to grab up anything that might serve as an impromptu weapon. But the chance of boarding lasted only for a few seconds, as the *Loon* was still forging ahead when rammed, and the *Gull*, already in reverse though carrying almost full way ahead at the moment of contact, had been checked by the collision, and immediately recoiled.

A clamor of yells that combined anger, astonishment and fear came from the stricken *Loon*. They checked suddenly as an automatic pistol began to bark viciously. Hugh dropped flat on the flooring of the cabin, none too soon, as the splinters flew out over him. The *Gull* was shooting astern, but with her wheel freed the pressure against the rudder jammed it hard over until held by the backing chain, so that she was backing in a short arc which, unless immediately corrected, would fetch her round in a circle and close to her victim.

This was the moment of danger that Hugh had anticipated—the first of such. In order to start the engine ahead, turn

about and make out across the Sound, he was obliged to expose himself. It would be then a question whether Doc would turn in pursuit of him, or head in the opposite direction for the end of the point in an effort to beach the *Loon* before she sank. It was also a question, depending entirely on the precision with which Hugh had done his job, whether or not the *Loon* would settle before laying the *Gull* alongside, should Doc decide on pursuit. Still again, the *Gull* might herself be, for all Hugh could tell so far, in a sinking condition.

But there was no help for it. Hugh grabbed up a long kapok cushion from a cabin locker and, holding it in a way to shield him as much as possible, went into neutral, then, twisting the wheel over, started ahead. The *Gull*, already partly turned, jumped forward. The fusillade from the *Loon* continued viciously and the marksmanship was good. Twice the kapok cushion wrenched itself about in Hugh's grip, like something alive, and his big cap was shot off. A bullet burned the outside of his hip, as though a hot iron had been laid there, and a long splinter stabbed into his forearm. Then the metal wheel was struck, numbing his hands and arms to the elbow.

All that saved Hugh at that moment was the quickness with which the *Gull* straightened out on her course. Then Hugh dived into the cabin again as a stream of bullets sang past where he had been standing. Splinters from the after bulkhead still flew into the cabin as the *Gull* presented her stern to the enemy. A cylinder dropped out of the running, its plug shattered. Then, except for a random shot or two, the firing ceased. Hugh peered out and saw that the distance between the two boats was about two hundred yards.

But he was dismayed to see that the *Loon* had turned and was heading after him in pursuit, and Hugh could not see that she seemed any the worse for the

ram. Her bow wave showed that Doc was giving her the best she had, and that it was good. Evidently this determined and cool-headed thug had determined on vengeance at any cost, though his craft might be sinking under him. Or possibly his alert brain had decided that the chance of overtaking the *Gull* and getting aboard her before he settled too deep to make the speed required to overhaul her was a better chance than to make for the beach, about two miles away. Still again, there might have been good reason for his not wishing to land on the beach, and to become immediately the object of inquiry.

It became then apparent that though going strong, the *Loon* was filling. Two of the men started to clear the dinghy, and, having done so, swung it out ready for lowering. A stern chase, Hugh reflected, is proverbially a long chase, but it may not be such if the pursuing craft manages to haul close enough to bring her guns within effectual range. Another hundred yards would accomplish this and as Hugh watched his pursuer he could see that she was gradually narrowing this margin of comparative safety. Being something of a mathematician, he began to ponder the ratio between the *Loon's* speed and the increasing water displacement that must gradually diminish it. Something of an abstruse problem; it would take a marine-constructor wizard to figure that out.

Nearer and nearer crept the *Loon*. The two men standing by the dinghy, now ready to serve as lifeboat, began to fire again. Then, after several shots that struck perilously close, they suddenly desisted. Hugh discovered why. His course was leading the chase toward an oyster tug that was putting down shell or seed oysters, about a mile ahead. The idea of rescue had not occurred to Hugh, but now it offered hope.

Peering over the taffrail at the *Loon*, Hugh then discovered that she was los-

ing ground, and this because she was unquestionably settling. The lower she went, he reasoned, the slower she would move ahead and the faster she would go down. At the same moment a sound of swashing under the cabin flooring told him that the *Gull* herself had not got off scot-free in this respect. Any well-built boat, however light, will stand a heavy ram on her planking butts, sunk into the oak stem as they are, and this well fortified. But even if the bow is not staved, it is bound to open up the seams. The *Gull* must be leaking badly.

But she was now distinctly drawing away from the *Loon*. Hugh reflected that Doc could be no great sailor, or he would have rigged immediately a collision mat with an awning, hauled it snug over the gaping hole in her side, and, having thus checked the inrush of water to a minimum, taken up the chase and quickly overhauled the smaller, slower craft. But now, even if this measure should occur to him, it was too late. The *Loon* had stopped.

Hugh started to circle. There was no longer any time to lose if he were to get the *Gull* back on her mooring before she settled. She would not sink, with no ballast to speak of and wood enough in her construction to float the engine. Probably she had air compartments, also.

But would it be a sensible procedure to go back to the mooring? Most decidedly it would not, while daylight lasted, and that would be for still two hours. Even without the police the *Gull's* smashed bow would attract attention and questioning. A rippling in the cabin attracted Hugh's attention, and glancing into it, he saw that the water was above the flooring. Plainly, the daylight was apt to last longer than was the *Gull*.

Hugh headed in for the point, just round the eastern extremity of which the Whiteacres boundary lay. On the bay side was the new subdivision and

colony of new shore houses of which the Ormsby cottage was one. The *Gull* could probably make the beach, which with the breeze in its present quarter, was under the lee of the high sand cliffs.

In this quandary Hugh looked over toward the *Loon*, about a mile away. She was settling fast, down about halfway between her deck and water line. To the westward a tow was coming down the Sound, which is to the eastward, and her course would take her close to the sinking craft. Hugh headed straight in for the beach at the end of the point.

He had made about half the distance to the shore when he saw the oyster tug moving over toward the *Loon*, that had not yet been abandoned. Doc, Hugh thought probable, had on abandoning the chase started efforts to save her. The oyster tug could aid these effectually, passing lines under and round the boat, then stopping the leap in some provisional fashion and rigging a bilge pump aboard her. These operations would keep them busy.

The *Gull* struggled along gamely and soon came in on the beach. As it was by this time the supper hour for most people, Hugh was relieved to see nobody about. Then, as the *Gull* grounded and Hugh splashed overboard with the anchor in hand, a dog with white-and-black marking came running toward him from behind a cluster of boulders.

Hugh instantly recognized Jasmine's setter, Cordite. His heart gave a squirm and then a flop. Out from behind the same heap of massive stones stepped Jasmine.

CHAPTER XV.

JASMINE LEARNS SOMETHING.

JASMINE walked up to Hugh as he stood patting the friendly setter, who appeared to recognize his rescuer of the day before.

"Well, señor," she said in her cool and slightly patronizing voice, "so you've de-

cided to return to our midst again? Or are you merely a shipwrecked sailor?"

"Both, Miss Jasmine." Hugh spoke with the slight accent that he had so firmly resolved less than twenty-four hours previously never again to use, to anybody.

She stared at him a moment; then asked abruptly: "What happened out there? I've been watching your doings from the top of the cliffs. Alone," she added, as he glanced quickly upward.

A stab of irritation went through Hugh. "I had an accident," he said slowly.

"Oh, is that what it was?" Jasmine's voice was limpid. "I'd never have guessed it."

"What then, Miss Jasmine?"

"Well, it looked like a very neat job of ramming and sinking an enemy ship, then beaching your own in a foundering condition. I'm afraid, señor, that you are not entirely the polite Pan-American that you would wish us to believe."

"Perhaps I had better tell you," Hugh said, "that I have come here under orders to serve your grandfather as secretary, and under further secret orders, to serve him as a bodyguard. That last is what I have just tried to do out there."

Jasmine was silent for a moment. Then she nodded slightly, as if to herself.

"I get you, Señor Pilar. I'll say you're good, in both capacities. Mr. Clamart's doing, I suppose. Who are those men out there?"

"Assassins, paid to kill Judge Fairbanks if they can, Miss Jasmine."

She received this news without apparent shock. "I see. Then why didn't you finish your job, once you started it?"

"I was unarmed, and they were firing at me."

"Really? But if you are a bodyguard, why go unarmed?"

"I was careless. Besides, when I go

out last night I think that perhaps I may be searched, and I do not want to make suspicion."

"Were you?" Her violet eyes fastened to him intently.

"Yes—was searched for a weapon. But I did not excite suspicion."

"You seem to know your work. It's a pleasant day for it. But aren't you dressed a little gayly for the part? That suit was scarcely designed for war. Or is it camouflage?"

"Precisely. It belonged to Mr. Ormsby."

"Belonged?" She raised her eyebrows. "Did you say 'belonged,' or 'belongs'?"

"Belong," Hugh said.

"But that's not correct English. Can it be possible, señor, that Mr. Ormsby has no longer any use for it?" Her eyes passed minutely over the loud, light checks. Then suddenly her lids narrowed. "You've been shot," she said. "You've been hit twice. On the forearm and on the hip."

Hugh glanced at the locations of his two superficial wounds. He had thrown off the coat to row, so that a red stain showed on the inside of his shirt sleeve, and on the light-buff tweed of the Oxford bags.

"It is nothing," he said. "A little splinter of wood in the arm, and a bullet that grazed the skin. I had forgot both scratches."

"Just now—out there?"

"Yes. I was trying Ormsby's boat, and these men came past. I knew they would kill me if they could, so I did not wait, but turned and ram' them."

The violet eyes kindled, "I saw it, and it was good. You know boats as well as you do archery, señor. I should say that grandpa had a snappy life guard. But he is still in danger, isn't he?"

Hugh nodded. "Yes, he is. But you must not tell him about me."

Jasmine looked thoughtful. "You are

right. He is a fiery old gentleman under his judicial calm. He'd be sure to say he could take care of himself without any help from outside. Is Hardy a life guard, too?"

"Of course. He would be that without orders. But on the other hand, if he had his orders he would obey them first, no matter what happened, because he is a trained soldier."

Jasmine smiled. "I see. And you let your orders slide if some danger threatened, and go out and put the enemy beyond the need of loud clothes and sink a boatload of others, because you are only a secretary."

"There were only three," Hugh said.

"Never mind. You did your best. But isn't this free-lance stuff apt to get you in wrong with the judge?"

"I'm afraid so," Hugh said. "Perhaps you can think of some lie for me to tell him."

"Louisiana ladies don't lie—unless they have to. Why not tell him you were kidnaped and locked up in Ormsby's boat?"

Evidently this was meant as a joke, but Hugh considered it a moment, then said gravely: "That is excellent. I shall tell that to the judge."

"But what really happened?" she asked.

"I was taking a walk last night in the fog, down the road to the water, and I heard some men talking in low tones. The judge's name was mentioned, and I heard enough to know they meant harm to him. They went off to a boat, and made patrol. To-day I learned at his house that Ormsby had gone away, so I got some of his clothes and pretended to be his young brother. You must not ask me how. I took his boat to scout, and met these men out there. They thought at first that I was Ormsby, and I knew that when they found out their mistake they might try to kill me. So I rammed them before they found it out."

"Just as easy as that." Jasmine's tone was mocking, but her eyes shone. "I think you are telling the truth, but not the whole truth, señor. Can't you swear me in as a deputy life guard?"

"I think you do that already for yourself," Hugh said. He turned and looked at the *Gull*, now firmly grounded. The tide was going. In three hours she would, with her three feet of draft, be entirely out of water, having been beached about an hour after the first of the ebb. "You could help me now, if you wish."

"How?"

"If you tell Hardy to bring down here some waste and white lead and heavy canvas and big copper tacks. Also I shall need some white paint, not much, and some green. Then, after dark, I can mend this boat so that she will not leak and will not show how she is hurt."

"But aren't you coming to the house?" Jasmine asked.

"Not yet. Perhaps not to-night. Ormsby has disappeared. He is a crook. Those men out there are his brigands. Whiteacres must be watched. I want to repair this boat before the tide comes. I may need her."

Jasmine's eyes glowed. "As a life guard you shine, señor. But I don't think there is any danger to-night. Grandpa is giving a party, aboard my namesake, *Jasmine*—a Noah's Ark of a houseboat."

"But where?" Hugh asked.

"Here. *Jasmine's* on the way up from the Erie Basin where she's been swept and garnished after her winter down on the bayou at Greenacres, our plantation in Louisiana. She ought to be here soon."

Hugh looked to the westward. The sun had set, but the light was abundant and pervasive, refracted softly from the haze blown in by the southwest wind. This breeze would freshen rather than die out with sunset, Hugh thought. There were the indications of

a fresh gale from that quarter—a "smoky sou'wester." It might blow a hurricane and not disturb the calm here under the high sand cliffs, but there are no hurricanes in May.

Down there to the westward there seemed to be a flotilla of small craft, and some large ones. The "ebb tide fleet" would be on its way down the Sound with the fair tide and wind, and the steamers for ports on the Sound and to the eastward, Newport and New Bedford and Boston and Portland, left New York at five, and should now be passing.

Straight out, the oyster tug was working at the *Loon*, but had been drifted by the tide and breeze about a mile farther away, to the northeast. Looking toward her, Hugh noticed a modern power yacht of the type that combines the house boat with the swift cruiser, stanch enough for an offshore run, heading directly for the Whiteacres landing.

"Here is coming one of the judge's guests," he said.

Jasmine's eyes followed his gaze. "That's *Diomed III.*, coming from Fishers Island to grandpa's party. She will have a small party of gay old survivals of the fittest. That's *Jasmine* just this side the big Boston boat, and she will make about the same speed. She's the biggest and fastest house boat afloat. Launched at Newport News last August. Grandpa and some of his old guard will be aboard her. This is apt to be a real party."

Hugh was covertly watching the girl's face. The rosy afterglow painted it in sheer beauty of the most disturbing sort, like the studied, intensified but softly glowing illumination of the stage, but warmly melting, as trick light cannot be. The whole of her seemed to pulsate in rich vibrations of color. In these soft but searching rays that were low and horizontal, reflected upward from the still water in the lee of the

cliffs to bathe Jasmine's face and figure with soft-drenching hues, there were no shadows cast downward, as usual out of doors. Her lovely features looked more than ever brushed upward, with a footlight effect. It gave an infinite seduction to the girl's face, a provocative allure that was tantalizing to the pouting lips as well as to the cool retroussé nose.

Hugh saw that he had been wrong in thinking at first sight that Jasmine's coloring was artifice, in part at least. The brilliant close-up she now supported showed it to be natural, for all its vivid intensity. This was proven now by the way in which her face paled slightly as she looked out at where the *Loon* was drifting off alongside the oyster dredger, and then the quick return of a deeper flush than before.

"Filthy brutes," she said in her throaty voice. "Can you imagine anybody wanting to harm an old dear like grandpa?"

"Perhaps he has not been so dear to their sort as to you," Hugh muttered, and looked away. His brief scrutiny of Jasmine had upset him, as it had done when she stood on the edge of the terrace—every time he looked at her, in fact. The chasm between them that had widened to make her remote had narrowed in these last few moments, but its deep shadows were black. He saw her now with tantalizing nearness, but still entirely aloof. Not even the wildest imaginings could ever place him within reach of her.

He said brusquely: "I must go."

"Where?" Jasmine asked. Her violet eyes that could be purple were, in this strong rosy light that contracted the pupils, a swimming color that was indescribable, a sort of heliotrope. Their expression was kind. "You ought to put something on those wounds."

"They are nothing. Scratches. I want to watch the Ormsby cottage, and those men out there. You will send

Hardy down with the things I told you?"

Jasmine nodded. "Waste and white lead and canvas and some big copper tacks——"

"And a little white and green paint. The boat is not much hurt, but leaks. I shall come back here a little after dark."

Jasmine nodded. Then she gave Hugh one of her brief, intense stares. Something in her eyes reminded Hugh of the way that Kathé had stared at him. In their different way both of these girls were crucibles of temperament, but not in the ordinary sense, or better perhaps, in both that and the extraordinary. Their voltage was high.

"Grandpa's lucky to have bodyguards like Clamart and Hardy and you," Jasmine said, "though I can't imagine his needing them. When he was on the bench, perhaps; but why now, when he is retired? Well, I mustn't keep you. Here's over the top with the best of luck!"

Her smile flamed out at him and she turned and walked away, springily even in the yielding sand. They had been standing at the top of the beach, almost against the sloping foot of the ascent, which was lower right here, with a rough track that slanted upward to the top. Jasmine, instead of starting back along the shore, took this steep trail, with the ease of a mountain girl.

A quarter of the way up she looked down and waved to Hugh. It was an ambiguous gesture, almost as if she had blown him a kiss. But that, of course, was an outrageous idea. The daughter of generations of the haughtiest Southern blood does not blow kisses to a man with a skin as pigmented as was that of Hugh. And, he reflected bitterly, if she had known that he was fair as Siegfried but wanted for murder, she would not have waved to him at all.

He tore off with an angry wrench the glamour that enveloped him and started

along the beach toward its bay side. His first duty now was to learn what had happened at the Ormsby cottage—if Kathé was there. And if she was, then what was he to do about her?

CHAPTER XVI.

KATHE AND HARDY.

A COLD-BLOODED old crocodile, the judge, Hugh reflected as he walked along. Pass sentence on a man and shove him overboard one night, in the fog and murk, and the next night give a gay party on his palatial houseboat to a crowd of his old cronies. Hugh wondered what these highly respected and distinguished members of the country's *crème de la crème* would say if they knew the sort of thing their blue-blooded, fire-eating old friend was up to. They'd shove him into some private retreat for the millionaire insane, probably, lest his senile dementia land him in a less gilded asylum.

Hugh saw two people approaching, far ahead, a man and a woman, walking along the water's edge. His disguise was good enough, but he had on Ormsby's noisily checked golf suit, and there was the *Gull*, her bow by this time clear of the water on the steep pitch of the beach, with an anchor carried up and hooked in a clump of stones. Questioning was to be avoided, so Hugh was about to follow Jasmine's example and go up the bank, when he discovered that the pair approaching were Hardy and Kathé. It struck him also that they were proceeding in a closer formation than the broad beach made necessary.

At the same moment they sighted him, not having done so sooner, perhaps, because the tawny coloring of his costume had a similar background in the sand cliffs with the afterglow upon them, thus giving him the mimicry of nature that a Nubian lion might enjoy. Or perhaps they had been too preoccupied by their mutual interests. At any

rate, they drew apart a little, and this gesture struck Hugh as significant. Kathé had expressed to himself no particular interest in or sympathy for Hardy.

As they now drew together, Hugh noticed the curiously intent manner in which Kathé was staring at himself, and saw her turn to Hardy with a quick and startled movement of her hand in Hugh's direction. Hugh had forgotten about his disguise, or at least that Kathé knew nothing about the darkly shaded features of it. Hardy's short laugh reached him. Hugh was aware that Hardy admired Kathé tremendously, and that morning the ex-soldier had not seemed entirely pleased with the state of affairs.

Coming close, now, Kathé continued to stare in a fascinated way, and with a shade of a frown. It was evident to Hugh that she did not find his rôle of Argentine a becoming one.

"Oh, gosh, counselor," she exclaimed in sound American, "but don't you look like the devil!"

"Thanks, Kathé," Hugh said dryly.

"What's struck the boat?" Hardy asked.

"It was the other way round," Hugh said shortly, for Kathé's evident disgust at his transformation irritated him. "That can wait. How did you make out at police headquarters, Kathé?"

"All right, I guess," Kathé said. "I came clean and told them who was Mr. Ormsby and how he was the Duke and my half brother, and how last night he disappeared and I fear somebody has got him. Then I tell how Doc and Lefty and the others come to the house, and that I overhear enough to know it is Lefty that killed Hiram Jones."

"That must have jarred them," Hugh said.

Kathé shook her head. "Not so much. The boss cap say to one of the others: 'That seems to check with the editorial this morning,' and he ask me

if I have seen the paper. I told him no, that I am too upset to want to read. Then after some questions he tell me that he will send out some men to look the ground over and to get what is in the safe, and for me to wait and go with them. I ask if I am under arrest and he smile and say, 'Oh, no, but stick round and keep in touch with this office.'"

"What about Lefty?"

"I think he send out general orders to pick him up. But he went out as soon as I tell him about Lefty. Then he come back and talk to me for nearly an hour. I tell him everything, but, of course, I do not say a word about you being here."

"You made a quick trip out here with the cops," Hugh said. "I watched the car in front of the cottage until Hardy managed to float the stain out to me. That was good, Hardy."

Hardy looked puzzled. "But the cops didn't get here until after you ran out," he said, "and they've just left. That is, about half an hour ago."

Hugh stared at him in dismay. "But there was a car in front of the cottage all the time that you were on the pier, waiting for a chance to slip me the stain. I don't know how long it was there before that, because I took a nap."

Kathé's eyes opened very wide. "A car?"

"Yes, a long touring car with three men and a woman. I saw them come out of the cottage and get into it and drive off. That was just before you left the pier, Hardy."

"How long ago?" Kathé started excitedly; but Hardy's metallic voice interrupted her. "Hell!" he said, and his face looked bleak. "That accounts for it."

"For what?" Hugh asked, with a cold feeling about his diaphragm.

"For the safe being empty. Kathé says there was nothing but receipted bills and insurance policies and the like."

Hugh gave a groan and struck his hands together. "Then it was Doc—and some others of the mob. He beat the police to it and cleaned the safe. He never thought of Kathé turning in evidence, of course. Well, that rooks it!"

"Rooks what?" Hardy asked.

"Oh, use your bean, Hardy," Hugh said, roughly, in his bitter disappointment. "I was sure there'd be some evidence of the Hiram Jones murder in that safe. The jewels, perhaps, or securities or something. I believe there was. And now Doc's cleaned it while I was asleep at the switch over aboard the boat. Why not? They've got nothing on Doc at this moment. What was to keep him from coming back? He found the house empty and unlocked the door and walked in and cleaned the safe and made his get-away—partly. And now if they pick up Lefty, there'll be nothing to stick on him but Kathé's unsupported testimony. And that's not worth a damn."

This last appeared to rouse Kathé's quick temper. "How not wort' a damn? Myself, I am no crook."

"You're in the same crew," Hugh said wearily, "or at least you have been, right along—keeping house for the Duke. His half sister. Your deposition alone isn't worth a swallow of sea water to a drowned man."

He wheeled about suddenly and looked out across the Sound, toward the oyster tug, alongside which the *Loon* had been supported. But now both had disappeared in the swimming haze. They had been dimly in sight when Hugh had looked last, but it seemed to him that they should, if in the same direction, be in sight still, the tug showing lights. It was well past the official hour for lighting, and as Hugh looked in that general direction he caught a twinkle through the deepening haze, the lighthouse on Stratford Middle ground.

Hardy said briefly: "Stung. Where

have you been? Why did you beach her?" And without waiting for an answer he added: "Jiminy! Here comes the judge's floatin' palace!"

"Listen," Hugh interrupted, "Doc and his bunch in that big fast one they came in last night passed me as I was heading back, to see if Kathé was all right——"

"That was foolish——" Kathé began; but Hugh silenced her fiercely.

"Keep still. Doc recognized the boat, and thought I was the Duke——"

"Blacked up?"

"Oh, cork it, Kathé. They started to turn. I knew if they found out who I was it would be good night, so I whipped round and rammed them." Hugh described his late maneuvers briefly but in detail. Hardy's light eyes began to gleam, and even Kathé's warm features changed their expression from anger to admiration. When Hugh had finished, Hardy breathed softly: "Gee, what a chance. If only——" He checked himself abruptly.

"Well, there you are," Hugh said, in despair. "The stuff they got from the safe was aboard the *Loon*. If I had guessed it for a second I'd have taken a chance and gone into them full bore, and jumped aboard and finished it."

"And got croaked," Hardy said shortly. "Still and all, you might have pulled it off." His pale eyes flickered over Hugh admiringly, then fastened on the blood-stained spots on the coat sleeve and thigh, from which latter the skirt of the coat hung clear. "They creased you?"

"That and a wood splinter," Hugh said impatiently. "Well, there's my break gone glimmering. Chances are they've got patched up and pumped out and gone on their happy way. The fact of their coming back and entering the house in broad daylight shows that they knew there was something they needed badly in that safe. And I sat there like a barnacle on a beam and watched 'em.

And now I've got to go back to Judge Fairbanks and do my minstrel stuff—and keep on doing it."

"Too bad," Hardy sympathized, "but still, it might be worse. Some guys would think they were in luck to have a bombproof like that to duck into."

"Sure," Kathé said. "You're safe anyhow, counselor. Your best girl wouldn't know you." She stifled a little giggle. "Better to be safe than handsome—or all blacked up and nowhere to go." She giggled again, evidently finding much to amuse her in Hugh's disguise, which had at first struck a sort of horror through her. "Don't mind me, counselor," she added soothingly. "Anyhow, I did the best I could for you."

The truth of this last statement checked the hot reply that was simmering on Hugh's lips. "I know you did, Kathé. Sorry I spoke roughly. It's the disappointment."

Hardy looked at him, frowning. "You ain't so safe at that, in a rig Ormsby's been flashing over the scenery. Where are your own clothes?"

"Back there in the boat," Hugh said. "I carried them aboard this morning, with some grub." He had not thought to make the change.

"Then you better go shift. Where were you bound, just now?"

"To look for Kathé." He gave the girl a bitter smile. "I didn't want her to think I was a quitter; but I guess that didn't matter such a lot."

"I want most for you to be safe, counselor," Kathé said. "There is no danger for me."

Hugh nodded. The complexion of his affairs seemed now to be altered again, like that of his skin. This also he now decided again to alter. Kathé was evidently off his hands. Hardy would take care of her. Evidently also Kathé's admiration for Hugh had been of an ardor only skin deep; scarcely that, in fact—color deep. Even Jas-

mine, a thoroughbred, a Southern girl with all the prejudices of her high caste could do a little better than that.

Hugh took a sudden resolution. He found himself again in the grip of that hot intolerance of his disguise that had overwhelmed him the evening before when he had washed off the stain in the garage, smashed the bottle that contained all that he had left of it, and set off down the road in his true color to take what Fate might send him.

The same impulse now gripped him. Curiously, the reason for it was similar, his recent contact with Jasmine and the distance between them spaced off by her lovely eyes as they rested on his swarthiness. This dark tint would not in itself have set him so apart from the girl, Hugh thought, even if it were deepened in shade than any purely Latin coloring. It was the thick, curling hair, a dead, sooty black, and his lips, that were in his natural coloring of a pleasing fullness, like the lips of a young boy. Time would thin and adversity straighten the set of them, but so far they were juvenile. Hugh had noted how Jasmine's eyes had flickered over these details, resented them.

It was this, and not Kathé's amused revulsion at his changed aspect, that now determined him to quit his hateful camouflage again, this time forever, come what might of it. Kathé's sudden change from admiration to amusement may have added a little to the sting, but it was not the cause of Hugh's fresh reaction. With Kathé safely disposed—and Hardy was a capable protector—Hugh was no longer under obligation that he could see to remain Señor Louis Pilar, of rather questionable descent.

He said quietly: "You're right, Hardy. I'll go back to the boat and shed this crazy quilt and climb into blue serge. As soon as it gets dark I want to patch up the boat. Can you lend a hand?"

Hardy shook his head. "Sorry, but I got a detail for to-night."

Hugh glanced involuntarily at Kathé. Hardy reddened under his fine, hard-weathered skin. "Aboard the house-boat," he said. "The judge is throwing a party and wants me to stand by. Watch the generator, and the like."

"Well, then, could you get me a few things before you go off aboard?" Hugh mentioned the articles of which he had need.

"Sure. I can fix you up, I guess. But I'll have to get going." He turned to Kathé. "Maybe you better go back to the house. If that woman that's to stop with you comes ahead of time and finds nobody there, she might beat it home again."

Kathé looked vexed. "All right. What you going to do with the boat now?"

"Patch her up, so she won't leak."

"Well, I wouldn't take her back where she was, if I were you. Somebody might get nosey."

"All right. I'll leave her somewhere and let you know where to find her. You can always sell her."

Kathé did not appear to be interested in the boat. "Well, good luck," she said briefly, and with a nod that included them both she started back down the beach. Trust an ex-sergeant of artillery to recover any terrain lost in a skirmish with an alien, Hugh thought. He was glad, even if irritated.

The two men walked on to the boat, where Hardy after a brief examination gave the opinion that she was not much hurt, and went up the short cut that Jasmine had taken. Hugh changed, washing off in the salt water his surface wounds. It was by this time nearly dark. He walked by the beach round the point to the steps, went up them, meeting only some of the servants, who were carrying down accessories for the party, glass and porcelain, flowers from the big conservatories of Whiteacres,

and sundry wooden cases with French names branded on them: Bordeaux, Epernay, Chablis, Beaune, and others whereof the names were British. No rum-runner had ever any profit in this supply of treasures of the vine, now by act of Congress an abomination, Hugh was aware. It would be lawful, actually prewar, and as such it deserved a place in a national museum. There certainly was not much left.

It was by this time nearly dark. At the top of the cliffs, removed a few paces from the head of the steps, there was a little rustic kiosk built of the native cedars, a point of observation for an extended view of the Sound and the Connecticut shore, to where, on the clearest of days, it melted into the blue of distance.

Reaching the top of the steps, Hugh was about to keep on for the house when he heard approaching what sounded like a jolly group of gentlemen coming toward the top of the cliffs by a pathway tunneled through the dense growth of cedars, partly natural, but reënforced by plantings. The flash of a torch in the hands of one of them was reflected to give an effect of stage scenery. Hugh recognized Judge Fairbanks' voice. It would be embarrassing to meet him here and now, so Hugh moved quickly over behind the kiosk, to wait until the party should have passed on down the steps, supposing them to be on their way to go aboard the house boat.

Instead, Judge Fairbanks, who was guiding a squad of his guests, now turned to the kiosk. Hugh, taken by surprise and not wishing to be discovered there as if spying on what was going forward, had barely time to slip behind a thick clump of cedars that grew against the flank of the small structure. He had no wish to eavesdrop on what was being said, but found this thrust upon him by the judge's first words.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO PRISONERS.

LET'S wait here a moment until my man Hardy comes up and reports the boat cleared of all the crew," said Judge Fairbanks. "Rather an extreme precaution, but Clamart insists upon it and he is running the show. A bit of a tyrant, Clamart, but he knows his book."

"No question about that," an incisive voice agreed. "He bullies us fellows in Washington now and then, but since he rid us of Humboldt we've pretty well given him his gait. Will Shane Emmett be with us to-night?"

"Yes, and Baron Rosenthal and Julius Jedburgh. The Chicago affair may keep Olivant and young Phineas Plunkett. They are working on it together. Olivant wired me this morning that he thought it certain our instructions would be obeyed."

"Well, let's hope so," an elderly voice said, a bit querulously. "That would rid the country of a pest from which it has suffered quite long enough."

"Only to inflict it on some other country," the judge answered, in his sharp, clipped tones. "If I had my way——" He checked himself abruptly.

"Other countries seem able to deal with such," the second speaker observed, with equal brevity, "and we are all agreed that it has reached a point where ours can no longer do so. In fact, we have faced that humiliating position for some time past. When it gets so that a mere boy can stand up in court and drag a murderous bandit out of the hooked talons of a rapacious prosecutor like the late Hiram Jones, the trial of such gentry with a big sinking fund behind them is scarcely more than a costly farce. Slapping the blindfolded face of Justice with a stocking full of filth."

A new voice said gently and with a

sort of quaint, old-fashioned diction: "It should be always borne in mind that we are principally beholden to our presumably friendly neighbors overseas for these dangerous disturbers of our peace. Yet when after years of vain effort we manage finally in some clumsy fashion to execute a sentence, all of Europe is thrown into a tumult of censure. Personally, I don't mind going on record as stating that if we cannot achieve justice in a space of seven years, we had better deport such convicts to where they originally came from."

There was a short pause, then Judge Fairbanks said briskly: "I quite agree with you, senator. Let us hope that such meetings of the intelligent minority as we are to hold to-night may be productive of something less arbitrary and more orthodox in the correction of our present absurd court procedure, in criminal cases alone—put a final stop to the two glaring blots on the otherwise excellent legislative system of a great enlightened country. I think the attorney general would agree with me that these are: the too-frequent immunity of the vilest sort of desperadoes, and the shameful police practice known as the third degree."

"And the latter," said the aged, querulous voice, "is the direct result of the former. In many cases the prosecutor and police are entirely aware that the only possible hope of a conviction lies in a confession, so the district attorney tacitly permits and the police perform, a manner of interrogation that is different only in degree to that of the Inquisition."

"That's true enough, admiral," said the brisk voice. "The British manage well enough without it, because the crown prosecutor and the police know that they can count with certainty on a trial that is not such an utter farce as to make the audiences of dramatic pieces modeled on them wonder whether or not the play is actually a farce or

reality. But aren't we getting rather ahead of the hounds?"

"You're right, sir," said Judge Fairbanks. "Let us admire a view of which I am a bit vain. See that big boat, a blaze of light. On a still, warm evening you can hear their bands. These steps of mine are long and steep, but I don't like to deface the side of the cliffs with an electric hoist. Besides, I'm not yet knee-sprung, and anybody who chooses can have the launch sent round to the pier. Some of our guests are coming that way. It's about as quick. Those sleeping in the house are to return that way, so don't let the prospects of a climb disturb you."

The conversation became jollier. Hugh, ashamed of his position behind the clump of cedars and at the same time aghast at what he had unintentionally overheard, thought best not to attempt to slip away. His least movement was apt to betray his presence there.

Could it be possible, he wondered, that this gathering was nothing more nor less than a meeting of vigilantes recruited from the country's very elect? Could these august personages who were evidently men who had occupied or still were active in positions of high authority—jurists, statesmen, naval officers of elevated rank, with a background of years of distinguished service—be now convening to debate or to discuss the suppression of crime by any such arbitrary practice as had been put in execution aboard the *Lilith*? Was this big gathering that he had thought to be one of those semisocial, semibusiness or political assemblies such as were wont to occur aboard the yachts of multimillionaire financiers—was this no more nor less than a secret meeting of the modern vigilantes?

The idea was outrageous. It was preposterous, incredible, bizarre. And yet Hugh was aware that Judge Fairbanks at least had officiated in such capacity,

and certainly none of those present could be more than his peer. But what then of established government? If such men as these found it now obligatory to take one department of the law into their own powerful hands, then to what could a citizen look for that absolute stability of law that is a country's firm foundation?

Hugh felt confused. His mind was a legal one, by nature and training, and even though himself at this moment an innocent fugitive from the law, and in disguise, he was yet unable to accept a situation of this sort. In a state of bewilderment he heard several footsteps coming up, then caught sight of three dark figures as they passed the kiosk, evidently without observing anybody to be inside it. Then, at the mouth of the path, one of them paused, evidently to light a cigar, as there was the sudden flare of a match and a whiff of smoke was carried by an eddy of the breeze to the place where Hugh nested in the cedars.

A breezy voice said: "Say, skipper, if a guy could hear just a little of what went on out aboard to-night he'd know how to play his election bets—hey, what?"

"You're right he would, Sparks," came the answer, in gruffer tones, muffled by the fat cigar. "And he might haul in a top or two on the stock market that would save him going to sea in a crate, too. Years ago I had a pal that captained the *Jolly Roger*, and one night after a meeting like this down in Gravesend Bay a big Wall Street man that had been aboard that summer for a cruise slipped him the good word as he went over the side. 'Cappy,' says he, 'buy Chicago Gas.' That was all, but it was enough. Old Cap'n Sea-grave is down in Florida now, where he's been raisin' grapefruit and pecans for the last twenty years, and worth his million."

They went on, flashing a torch ahead.

When out of earshot there came a low chuckle from the kiosk.

"You might tell your good skipper to buy a little Citizens' Safety Preferred, judge."

The others laughed. Judge Fairbanks said: "Only we land-lubbers need that, Mr. Justice."

Hugh wondered if the country's chief executive would be at that meeting. Anything seemed possible now. London Bridge was falling down. There came then the sound of a light tread springing up, two steps at a time. Hugh heard rapid breathing. Judge Fairbanks called, in a crisp but lowered tone: "Hardy!"

"Yes, sir." Hardy stepped up to the kiosk. "Ship's cleared, sir. Mr. Clamart's compliments, and he has come round and aboard with the last of your guests, sir."

"All right. Service all set?"

"Yes, sir. Ling Foo is standing by in the galley and Mr. Clamart's chauffeur is looking after the wines. The plant is running smooth as oil, sir."

"Well, gentlemen, let's go. Hardy, keep your light on the steps. MacKenzie and Hubert patrolling the boat, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

Judge Fairbanks and his guests moved toward the head of the steps. One of them, the aged admiral, Hugh thought, observed: "Rather an exposed position for your fleet, judge, in violent winds from north of west to east."

"True, admiral, but we've heavy moorings down. *Jasmine* is fast to a four-ton mushroom. Mind the steps, everybody. They're fairly steep."

The little party started down. Hugh was thinking: "What a chance for a movie super-crook with an airplane and a five-hundred-pound package of explosive." Such a combination might put a slump in Citizens' Safety Preferred. It occurred to him then that he himself, if truth were known, deserved some-

thing better of these exalted modern vigilantes than to be skulking there in the cedars under cover of the night and a coat of dye. His information to Clamart, unwitting though it might be, had unquestionably resulted in the removal of their most dangerous enemy, located there to discover what might be going on, and to remove its prime actor, Judge Fairbanks. Hugh had then sent to their final reckoning two more of the mob, and he had that afternoon torn a big hole in the security of three others.

What, he now wondered, might be his reward if this were to be reported, and vouched for? What less could they do than to cause the charge against him for the murder of Hiram Jones to be set aside? Certainly there was enough powerful authority in this assembly to effect that. But would they take such action? Would Clamart go so far as to urge it?

Probably not, Hugh decided bitterly. He had first forfeited Clamart's protection by a breach of discipline, then repudiated further assistance. Possibly Clamart had meant to test him out with an idea of giving him later such a position of confidence as Hardy occupied. Hugh felt that he had missed this chance, and he was not sure, in any case, that he desired it. His mind still clung tenaciously, and despite the desperation and humiliation of his prospects for the future, to an establishment of law and order so firmly rooted that no conditions, no emergency, could budge it from its base, however deplorable these conditions might have become.

And yet, he reasoned on the other side, the same situation had worthy precedent, and in this very United States of America. It had happened not so many years ago in the Far West, during and after the gold rush, and in the South, during the period of reconstruction. At these times the best of citizens had given such movements their un-

qualified support, their active partisanship. Why not, then, to-day?

Hardy, Hugh reflected, would not help him. Hardy's sense of discipline had been affronted, just as had Hugh's own sense of lawful procedure. Besides, it was possible that Hardy might be a little jealous of him, first in Frank Clamart's regard, then in that of Kathé. Hardy might be jealous also of what Hugh had achieved. So far as Kathé was concerned, her favor of Hugh had plainly not struck very deep. His mere disguised appearance had been enough to negative such attraction as he might have had for her in his natural guise.

This had not cut deep, as had Jasmine's shrinking. Here now, Hugh realized, was his recent history repeating itself. He had been content enough with his excellent disguise as a half-breed hidalgo and aborigine, with possibly some few African corpuscles, disclaim them as he might. Then at sight of a certain veiled repugnance in Jasmine's violet eyes, this disguise had become insupportable, and he had discarded it. Returning to it again, he had made up his mind that it offered the only self-protection. Then Jasmine had come into the picture again, with the same result as before: Hugh's violent disgust at the disguise.

His decision to return at any cost to his own personality was now, Hugh told himself, a final one. The next thing was to accomplish the transformation. He had left the cleansing solution in the closet of Hardy's room, on a shelf, and the chances were it would still be there. Both doors, room and closet, might now be locked, but if so there were means to force them.

Hugh was about to take the path to the garage when he heard the snapping of a dried twig in the depths of its dark tunnel. No movement was audible after the slight sound, and this stealth was accusatory, because there should be here no occasion for stealth. Still,

it might be harmless enough, Hugh thought as he waited, listening, at the corner of the kiosk. Possibly some curious servant or member of the house boat's personnel sent ashore might be prowling about.

And then again, it might be another sort of skulker, somebody who had reason to doubt that here was the social or business or political conference that the gathering would appear. One thing, at least, was certain: that a twig does not snap of itself when lying on the ground. And from the sharpness of the crack made by this one, Hugh reasoned that a considerable weight had borne upon it. Dried cedar twigs are strong. Somebody was in that black arboreal tunnel. It was probable, Hugh thought, that this furtive scout had been stealing silently along the path for the head of the steps and when almost to the opening had heard the slight rustle made by Hugh as he came round the corner of the kiosk.

Hugh set himself to wait. He did not believe that whoever had snapped that twig could move away unheard. The sound had been very close. If absolutely still himself, the other was apt to decide that the slight noise had been made by a hare or rabbit or some nocturnal animal or bird. Even a slight lapse of time in darkness and a state of physical inertia wears away the caution of the scout that is not trained. Hugh remembered Clamart, to have said in one of their talks: "It takes a cat, an aborigine, or a complete criminal to watch in the dark for even ten minutes without budging."

With this in mind, he set himself to a duel of endurance with whoever might be there on the path. It occurred to him then, as the minutes passed, that this might not be a smiling matter. Possibly the house-boat party was under dangerous surveillance. Hugh's mental training as a criminal lawyer began to work rapidly and clearly. It recalled

the talk he had overheard while hidden behind the shower curtain, especially that part of it contributed by Lefty. The Duke, Hugh believed, had been detailed to remove Judge Fairbanks, and it was with this object less than any hope of pulling off a robbery in so exclusive and well-guarded a colony that the Duke had installed himself in the rôle of an English gentleman. It looked as if the four men with whom Hugh had clashed at the Ormsby cottage were a detail of hired killers who were to act under the Duke's directions.

But if this theory was correct, then might not Doc have immediately reported the Duke's mysterious seizure and the killing of the two watchers, at which underworld headquarters, now convinced that they had opposed to them a fearful enemy, had immediately assigned a fresh detail to remove it at any cost? This idea was supported by the two men aboard the *Loon* with Doc, neither of whom had been Lefty. The boat had passed Hugh close enough for him to make sure of that. They had looked to be men more of Doc's type, superior to his former helpers.

They would scarcely suspect the distinguished gathering aboard the house boat to be convened for the discussion of criminal suppression by arbitrary means, Hugh felt sure. The idea of such a vigilante movement would be too bizarre to be suspected by anybody. Even after the conversation he had just overheard in the kiosk Hugh would never have suspected it himself but for the scene he had witnessed aboard Clamart's yacht. Even now he was by no means convinced that the whole assembly was involved, or even sanctioned such drastic measures. But of one state of affairs Hugh felt convinced: that Judge Fairbanks himself was now the focus for a determined attempt at destruction.

While these thoughts were revolving in his mind, his special senses did not

for a moment relax their vigilance. His hearing, naturally acute, kept tense to catch the slightest sound. Right here, in spite of the strong sou'wester that was blowing, the air was still, except for faint random puffs, because the flanking strip of woods and the higher ground beyond furnished a lee. Hugh himself could scarcely be visible, because the night was by this time very dark and murky from the haze, and he had not emerged from the cedar growth against the little building.

Nevertheless he was beginning to fear that his presence there had been discovered, and that the prowler had managed to steal silently away, when he heard a distinct rustle that was immediately followed by the agitation of a bush, or low-hung branch. With this there came the sound of light footfalls, groping and uncertain. Then a dark figure emerged from the mouth of the path, moved toward the head of the steps and paused.

Thus placed, the figure was dimly described against the less opaque background of sky, and Hugh saw that it was a woman. More than that, it held even in the murk a light graceful pose that was identifying. Here, Hugh perceived, was Jasmine. In spite of his warnings that danger threatened her grandfather, or perhaps because of them, she had slipped down to look over the big house boat from the top of the cliffs.

Hoping not to startle her, Hugh said softly: "Miss Jasmine—it is Louis Pilar."

At the first sound of his voice Jasmine pivoted quickly about, then said with a catch in her breath: "What are you doing here, Louis?"

"Watching," Hugh answered, and stepped over to where she stood. "You should not have come. It was a foolish thing to do."

"Why not? I got restless and jumpy. There's something about all this I don't

seem to get. Why should the house be patrolled?"

"Is it?"

"Yes. When I came out just now to get the air I ran into Mr. Clamart."

"Clamart?" Hugh thought of what Hardy had reported.

"Yes. I can't seem to turn round lately without running into Clamart or Hardy or Mac or you. It looks to me as if I were being bodyguarded. Why should all the house-boat crew be sent ashore?"

"Meetings of this sort, politics or high finance, have to take every precaution against leaks," Hugh said. He lowered his voice and asked in a murmur that was barely audible: "Have you come here directly from the house, or have you been standing there on the path for several minutes?"

"Straight from the house," Jasmine answered, in a louder voice. "Why?"

This question was promptly answered, though not by Hugh. A whistle that was in good imitation of a plover, but less loud and clear, sounded from the black thicket where the path came out. It was echoed from the same fringe of cedars farther to the right, then again from the other side of the kiosk. The thin, low, lilting *phew-phew—phew-phew—phew-phew* might have deceived any but a bayman or an experienced naturalist.

They did not deceive Hugh, who was to some extent both, having spent much of his early leisure shooting wild fowl in the marshes of Barnegat Bay. Besides, the calls were close by and at this moment there came two similar whistling calls from below. Hugh caught sight of a dark, moving figure against the sand as it sprang for the steps and started up. Most evidently they were surrounded, though whether by friendly pickets posted by Clamart or hostile ones, Hugh could not determine.

There was a stir in the cedars at the black mouth of the path. Then a voice

that was cold, emotionless and fatal as death, said briefly:

"Hands up!—and quick!"

Hugh obeyed. He stood close to Jasmine, almost brushing her. The girl's body stiffened as she stood, but she neither cried out nor made any move.

A man stepped out of the dark orifice and became visible enough for Hugh to see that he was masked. Another emerged from behind the kiosk, while a third appeared from the fringe of cedars a few paces beyond where Hugh and Jasmine stood, on the other side. Scarcely had these three, all masked, closed in on the pair, when a fourth, similarly equipped, came springing up the steps to reach the top, panting slightly. Hugh wondered how many more of this mob might have filtered into the big estate to take up their positions as arranged. He noticed that the third man's mask was longer than the others, halfway down his chest, and that he had on black gloves.

In silence the first man to appear ran his hands deftly over Hugh's body. Then, with a businesslike brevity, he pushed the muzzle of his weapon against Hugh's ribs while one of the others jerked his wrists behind him and handcuffed them. Two of the men hooked their arms into Jasmine's, one on either side. She gave a furious wrench, but did not cry out. The silence in which these quick operations had been conducted was then broken by the first bandit.

"Better come along quietly, miss," he said. "You're not being kidnaped. We want to keep you out of harm until we get through, here."

Jasmine did not answer.

They started rapidly along the edge of the sand cliffs, in the direction away from the end of the point. After her first involuntary resistance at physical contact, Jasmine made no further struggle, nor did she try to delay the pace by lagging back.

Hugh, realizing the sort of forces by which they were caught up, was surprised that he had not been summarily knocked in the head, or knifed, and his body flung back into the thicket. There was at least one ray of hope in a situation that was otherwise very dark. Clamart was on the job. Hugh had interrupted Jasmine when she was speaking of having run into Clamart because it had been of the first importance to know if the cracking sound had been made by her or by somebody else. Clamart might have asked her to remain indoors, told her that it was the judge's order that she do so; and Jasmine, nettled at this, might have slipped out, evading him. But Clamart was Clamart. At any rate, Hugh did not believe Jasmine to be in any great danger. Her value as a hostage was far too great.

There was a rough pathway along the top of the sand cliffs, and this they now followed rapidly for about half a mile. Coming then to a depression in the brim, the men on either side of Hugh plunged over the edge, holding him between them. The same course was followed with Jasmine, so that the whole party slid down in a glissade of sand, swiftly at first and in a manner that would have terrified anybody unfamiliar with the formation, but actually with no danger. The man in the long mask and black gloves steadied Jasmine carefully. Hugh noticed that one eye opening of his mask was torn out at the corner.

Scrambling up at the bottom, they hurried their prisoners down the beach to where a man was standing beside a long, flat-bottomed skiff. Hugh was thrust aboard and turned to see Jasmine being helped in after him, not ungently. Two of the men got aboard after her, the other two shoving the boat clear, then stepping in. The man in the stern dropped his oar in a stern chock and began to scull, straight out

from the shore. Down here on the water the haze was even thicker, and they had proceeded a furlong or more when Hugh, facing forward, saw dimly ahead the bulk of what some moments later looked to be a small fishing schooner.

Then, as they drew close to the little vessel, Hugh was able to distinguish alongside her a long power boat that a moment later he recognized as the *Loon*. This identity was confirmed, when close aboard, by the sight of a patch of sorts, short pieces of thin plank knocked from a cabin door, perhaps, with heavy canvas tacked over. Evidently the oyster tug's salvage job had been efficient, heeling the launch alongside so as to pump her out, then rigging a jury collision mat of sorts that would be fairly tight.

The prisoners were curtly ordered to climb aboard the schooner, across the deck of the *Loon*, both steadied against the movements of the boats, as even at this short distance from the shore a slight swell was running. The wind struck down in strong, gusty flaws. As Jasmine clambered up onto the *Loon* a cultured voice that Hugh recognized instantly as Doc's said politely:

"We are sorry to have to frighten you, Miss Brown. We're doing this only for your safety. You will be set at liberty a little later."

Jasmine said briefly: "I understand."

Hugh was puzzled. Doc had practically repeated what the first man had said. Evidently Jasmine had been mistaken for Evelyn Brown, who was Judge Fairbanks' confidential secretary and had been friendly with the Duke. As Jasmine had come North from New Orleans to arrive at Whiteacre only the day before Hugh's own arrival there, her identity would not have been known to the Duke in time for him to have mentioned to his mob the presence of Judge Fairbanks' granddaughter.

Jasmine's acceptance of the error was easily understood, and spoke well for the girl's presence of mind. She had

quickly grasped the idea that as Evelyn Brown she might be in no danger, whereas, if known to be Jasmine Fairbanks, it might be quite a different matter.

Hugh himself was now shoved aboard the schooner, which proved to be about what he had thought her, fisherman-built if not used for such service. No roughness was shown him, nor any particular consideration. He doubted that these men knew or cared what his standing and position at Whiteacres might be, whether guest or employee of some sort. It seemed to him that he had been gathered in merely because he happened to be with the presumable Evelyn Brown.

Jasmine and he were now told to go below, into an after cabin which was rough in its appointments, but tidy enough. The little vessel was new and did not look as if much used. The hatch was slid to, but Hugh did not hear the click of any lock. The sound of footsteps on deck overhead ceased abruptly, but there came the sound of low voices talking rapidly on the launch alongside.

"What's up, do you think?" Jasmine asked.

"It looks to me like a planned hold-up of the house boat," Hugh said.

"To get grandpa?"

"Perhaps. But don't worry. They can't pull it off." He lowered his voice, speaking close to her ear. "The house boat is patrolled by two armed men—MacKenzie and another. Then there are Hardy and Ling Foo and Clamart. All three are handy with their guns, I should say."

"So is grandpa. He's quick as a flash. And there must be others in all that crowd of old-timers. These crooks are going to get the surprise of their lives."

"Crooks are dumb in some ways," Hugh agreed. "That crowd is no dinner party of pampered high-livers. They are all strong men of two genera-

tions back who have fought their way to the top. I can see them sticking up their fists like a car of Pullman passengers." He gave a short laugh. "Not!"

Jasmine looked at him curiously. Then she said dryly: "Aren't you forgetting something, Señor Pilar?"

"What?"

"Your accent—and English that if not broken has been slightly bent."

"That is only when I am embarrassed," Hugh explained.

"I see. There's nothing embarrassing about all this. In fact, it's the sort of thing to make a South American feel at home."

"Its features are Pan-American, but

no country can show anything of this sort to the United States. Listen!"

The men in the boat alongside seemed very busy. Sharp rappings suggested a reinforcement of the collision mat. They would count on the boat, Hugh thought, for a long night run, and were strengthening the repair job against it.

He believed only in part what he had told Jasmine. There was something more afoot than longshore piracy, a holdup and loot. Any bandit knows that rich, prominent, highly respected men seldom carry much cash on their persons. The check book suffices anywhere. The object here, Hugh believed, was one of general wholesale destruction, a massacre.

Concluded in the next issue.



A CRITICISM OF CHAMPAGNE

COLONEL FRANKLIN PIERCE MORGAN, the veteran but at the same time youthful Washington correspondent who has seen more presidents come and go than any other man in the District of Columbia, reads his morning paper in the lounge of the National Press Club. He was engaged in this diversion when his eye fell on a description of the taste of champagne attributed to his royal highness, Prince Aage of Denmark. "It tastes," the prince was quoted, "like a dusty windowpane."

"The man who can say a thing like that," enthusiastically declared the dean of the capital's journalism, "be he royalty or roughneck, deserves applause! However, it calls for elucidation, learned but not lengthy. The first glass tastes like a London fog recently split by a German bomb. It is a rare hero who can imbibe his first glass of the amber liquid without furtively looking around with an expression indicative of a fear of being shot from ambush.

"It is after the sixth or seventh glass that, as the prince said, it so strikingly resembles the flavor of a dusty windowpane. For it is then that the partaking gentleman's thinking is impeded by a veil of cobwebs and his outlook upon life astonishingly clouded, so much so that he regards the most horrible-looking women as queens of beauty, and is mysteriously and amazingly moved to consider himself capable of a Demosthenesian oratory for which a palpitating world has long waited and of which his appreciative companions must no longer be deprived.

In other words, this stuff that tastes like a dusty windowpane carries a kick of which the most muscular and vindictive army mule might well be proud."



THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KILLED

By Robert J. Pearsall

He would allow no one to interfere with his murder.

TO tell the truth, I hardly noticed Rutker before he made that remark about expecting to be killed within a week; he was such a commonplace-looking individual. "Investment Banker," the city directory described him—florid, slightly fat and forty-odd, and with no more signs of undue egotism and acquisitiveness than one expects to find in a successful mediocrity. Plainly, he was worried, but so was every one who came to Meynard's Corrective Agency. It might be a blackmail threat, I thought, or something about a disappearance of property; certainly I would never have imagined anything as serious as a threat of death.

What Meynard felt, I couldn't tell. True, he started at Rutker's words, but the start had the effect of bringing his knee against a button hidden under his desk. That flashed a signal which would have brought me to attention if I hadn't already been rather idly watch-

ing. We had a rather clever periscopic arrangement for that, whereby I, in my adjoining room, could supplement Meynard's observation of the visitors to his office. Meynard's eyesight wasn't what it used to be. Moreover, my stenographic notes were sometimes useful, and also the photographs I took from my place of concealment. Meynard disclaimed the name "detective" but he used all the facilities of the craft.

I saw Meynard sort of perch himself on the edge of his chair. He looks like an old hawk at such times, with his bright eyes and knife-thin features; but, of course, his chair was carefully shadowed, and all Rutker could see was a fragile, gray old man. Gray all over—clothes and hair and skin and eyes, if their color had been perceptible to Rutker.

"You mean you *expect* an attempt to kill you," Meynard said reassuringly. "I don't want to be too trite, but fore-

warned is forearmed. Certainly, if you place yourself under our protection you——"

I suppose Meynard was as surprised as I was at Rutker's interruption:

"Protection! No. Lord! I could protect myself. That retainer I've just handed you is for running down the man that kills me. You're to do nothing at all to prevent it, and that must be in the agreement."

Meynard fingered the pretty sizable check, and I prepared myself for the chilling sight of it being passed back to Rutker. I'd seen such things happen several times.

"Let's see," said Meynard. "You say Mr. Slosson sent you to me. Does he know your—rather remarkable desire?"

"Certainly not."

"I hardly thought so. It's true that Mr. Slosson has employed me, but in my peculiar field, which is crime *prevention*. That's about all I'm interested in. Crime is a social abnormality—why permit it? But I'll not bore you with my fad, as people call it. Only as it bears on your case, which seems to require that I flatly contradict my creed and practice. Knowing of a contemplated crime, to stand idle and let it be committed in order that I may trace down the criminal—frankly, Mr. Rutker, I've a certain feeling of revulsion."

It was surprising that he didn't put it stronger than that. Besides, in law there's such a thing as an accessory before the fact. But I figured he might have gone on if Rutker hadn't broken in again.

"Revulsion, Mr. Meynard! Believe me, it isn't necessary. Honestly, do I look like a man who'd resign himself to death without good reason?"

He certainly didn't. I saw Meynard seem to hesitate again.

"Well! And about the reason?"

"It's to prevent a worse crime. You say that's your business—preventing crime. It's mine, too, right now. A

crime against one who—— Tell me, Mr. Meynard, do you believe in youth?"

It was a peculiar question, coming from Rutker, but it hit Meynard's pet foible exactly. He is one man who believes in youth the more strongly the farther he gets away from it—reverences it, trusts its instincts and impulses, blames most of its mistakes on the cramping, repressive influences of the narrowed, hardened older people. He expressed a lot of that in his reply.

"Do I believe in Heaven, Mr. Rutker?"

Rutker started, seemed a little taken aback by Meynard's seriousness. But the next instant he fell in with it exactly.

"Well, so do I. And this is to save youth. 'Youth will be served,' the saying is. But there's more than that to the matter. The fact is, youth *should* be served. We must safeguard youth. Youth's so precious and so impetuous that——"

"So desirous and so desirable," put in Meynard in a peculiar tone.

"Oh, yes!" Again Rutker seemed to falter, but recovered himself instantly. "Well, to save youth—that's what I want you to help me to do."

"And to do that, you're willing to be murdered."

"Yes."

"I wish you could speak a little more plainly."

"I wish I could, too." Rutker launched himself on a speech that bore evidence of rehearsal. "But you'll understand why I can't be specific. Fairness is one thing. We'll have to assume a possibility that my suspicions may be all wrong. Again, if I told you everything, it would make it more embarrassing for you. You might feel morally, even legally, called upon to interfere."

"But as it is, you know nothing except that I claim to be in danger. And you do nothing except to let things go on as they would if I'd never called

on you, or as they will if you refuse my case. Certainly there's nothing wrong in that. Then, when I'm murdered—or let's say, *if* I'm murdered—and you track down the murderer, you'll find that the two of us together will have prevented a greater crime. Why, Mr. Meynard, as I said before, this affair is exactly in your line."

"Maybe so. Maybe so," murmured Meynard to my surprise.

"Then you'll take the case?"

"Well, let's see if I understand the conditions exactly. There are just two. First, that I do nothing to prevent your—murder, if it be such. Second, that I do everything in my power to discover and punish the criminal involved, whoever he may be. Is that the whole agreement?"

It seemed that Rutker paused unnecessarily long before replying, but he could evidently find nothing to object to in Meynard's words.

"Quite, Mr. Meynard," he said. And a minute later Meynard was bowing him out.

I had been busily writing as well as watching, and before Rutker could have got to the elevator, I entered with my notes. Meynard was still standing, gazing fixedly at the door through which Rutker had passed. It seemed as though he was *feeling* for something, or perhaps he was only thinking very intently. One could never tell where reasoning left off and intuition began, in his case. Or, indeed, if his so-called intuition wasn't really fine, imaginative reasoning.

"Oh, the notes!" He turned to me. "What do you think of our new case, Waring?"

Meynard claims my opinions sometimes help him. If they do, it's because they're usually opposite to his own.

"I think it's a hoax of some kind. That fellow isn't the kind to lay down his life for anybody or anything."

"You're a skeptical fellow, Waring,"

said Meynard, smiling slightly. "But here's a five-hundred-dollar check paid to me for services which are to begin only with his death. And he didn't impress me as a merry-andrew philanthropist, either."

"Nor me," I admitted, thinking of Rutker's downward-curving lips.

"Well, then, he must really expect death," pointed out Meynard. "That is, unless he's making us a gift of the five hundred."

"That's true."

"And death isn't exactly what you'd call a hoax. No, Waring, there's something pretty serious about all this. Something we'll have to look into. What he said about youth——"

"Unfortunately," I reminded him, "you've put up the bars against investigation. The conditions that you agreed to——"

"I agreed that I wouldn't interfere, and I will not. But I also agreed to do my best to find his murderer. Since he's so positive that there is to be a murder, I can't begin my preparation for catching him too soon. Just give those notes to Davis, will you, and tell him routine twenty-two."

True, routine twenty-two—our name for one of our systems of investigation—should fetch something of interest, for it meant that everything that was to be learned about Rutker would soon be in Meynard's hands. I hardly think Rutker would have agreed to Meynard's interpretation of his instructions. Meynard wasn't above employing a little sophistry at times, if the occasion was sufficiently important. But, all the same, this business of putting a client of his under unsolicited surveillance had implications in it that I didn't like.

The next few days I got so interested in another case—the matter of the missing Vandeventer butler, that Meynard had put into my hands completely—that I almost entirely forgot about the man who insisted upon being killed. When

I did think of it, the twin contradictions in it caused me to regard it less and less seriously. Stolidly sane as Rutker seemed, I figured he was suffering from some mild aberration along that line.

But one evening Meynard invited me out to dinner.

"I think I can show you," he said, "the man that's to kill Rutker."

"If any one's to kill him," said I.

"Exactly. But in a day or so, you'll eliminate that 'if.'"

"You mean it? And you're still keeping hands off!" I cried in some consternation.

"I am," said Meynard soberly. "You remember Rutker spoke of a worse crime than murder. There's only one crime that I feel absolutely certain is worse, and it happens that one is involved. Rutker was quite right. It's my business to stand aside now so as to prevent that greater crime later. Well, come on."

It was to the Argonaut he took me—a modest enough place. A little after we settled ourselves, he called my attention with a jerk of his fork to a table to my right. At first I couldn't believe I'd caught his signal right, for certainly the couple sitting there would seem to have nothing to do with crime of any kind—or, indeed, with anything in the world but just each other. There was a glow in each pair of eyes as their owners leaned forward, talking to each other; a glow upon their faces, too. A roseate halo might have been imagined surrounding them. Oh, they were in love, all right! Youth, youth! I have something of Meynard's sympathy with it.

I believe I was smiling, when all of a sudden the meaning of Meynard's signal came to me, and I brought my head around to face him with a jerk.

"Impossible!" I half whispered.

"Rutker's secretary and Rutker's ward."

"Well, what of that?"

"They meet here every day. Stolen meetings, though they live under the same roof. Rutker's violently opposed. The girl can't marry till she's twenty-one without Rutker's consent, according to her father's will. If she does, she loses her fortune. Rutker's death would end that prohibition. Clark—that's the secretary's name—is a brilliant statistician, but poor. The girl's inheritance runs close to a hundred thousand. Do you begin to get the picture—and what Rutker meant about preventing a crime against youth?"

I got it all right, instantly.

"The girl's marriage to a murderer," I breathed.

"I murderer in his heart. What if Rutker believes Clark that? Rutker also, we may assume, loves the girl as a father might. He believes Clark intends to kill him. If Rutker balks the crime, Clark may escape and marry the girl anyhow. The only sure way to save her, therefore, is to permit the murder and make sure that Clark is caught. Therefore Rutker complimented us by — Well, why so incredulous?"

I didn't know I was looking incredulous. Feeling rather than logic was speaking, I suppose. I'd chanced another scrutiny of the couple, a little more in detail this time. The girl was all in green; perhaps that was why I thought of a human flower. She was slender, dark, vivid rather than beautiful. The thing that set her apart was the soft radiance in her eyes. The man was more of a type—blond, ruddy, light-haired, athletic, with clean-cut features. He had the eyes and forehead of a student and an aggressive jaw and nose—sometimes a dangerous combination.

"What's he doing, working as a secretary?" I asked Meynard.

"I've found out that, too. His interest, so far as any one knows, is in higher mathematics. Funny, but some people are that way, you know. Well,

he's writing a textbook. Has to live meanwhile, so he took this job, which gives him a livelihood and some leisure besides. He's always been desperately poor—and quite desperately ambitious, too."

"But—a secretary! I'd hardly think a statistician would make the best secretary in the world."

"Just about, for Rutker's purposes. I've learned that Rutker's business is more in the stock market than in investment banking. And he's conceived an idea—there may be something in it—that there's some undiscovered law governing the movements of stocks. So Clark's job is tracing back the price movements for the last fifty years or so, trying to correlate them and discover that law. You see how everything fits in."

"Everything?" I questioned dubiously, thinking of my first conclusion in regard to Rutker's capacity for self-sacrifice.

"Everything," repeated Meynard. "I may say, without going into the matter any further, that everything routine twenty-two has uncovered points unmistakably to the ending Rutker forecasted."

But that ending was Rutker's murder. Somehow I couldn't believe in it, in spite of Meynard's assurances. Everybody seemed out of character; Rutker as the self-sacrificing victim, Meynard as the complacent onlooker, and even Clark as the cold-blooded villain. Meynard puzzled me the most, for I knew him so well. As for the others, I'd been long enough working as investigator for Meynard, to realize that human nature is incalculable. I couldn't believe in it, but the thing might happen.

And, sure enough, it did. The very morning after our dinner at the Argonaut, I was called into Meynard's private office. Smiling grimly, Meynard handed me an "extra," indicating the

featured news with a scrawny forefinger.

"Read this," he said.

I had to fight back the chill that came over me as I read:

WEALTHY BANKER MURDERED.

Early this morning the home of Amos Rutker, on Parnassus Avenue, was burned to the ground by a fire presumably of incendiary origin. In the ruins was found the body of the well-known banker, with a bullet hole through the forehead. The police theory is that the house was fired after the murder in an attempt to destroy evidence. An immediate arrest is expected. John Clark, the dead man's secretary, who was the only other person sleeping in the house last night, escaped uninjured.

I looked up from the paper aghast, and met Meynard's calm, old eyes.

"A plain enough hint, isn't it, that Clark's the man? I've just been phoning the police. They really have him in custody already, though he doesn't know it. Inspector Clifford's coming out at my request. He's pretty sore at me for not trying to save Rutker, but I promised to turn over all the evidence I have."

"Evidence! You mean you have some? Against Clark?"

"Oh, plenty," Meynard said almost carelessly. "It'll be a very short case. I was going to ask you if you wanted to come along."

"Of course. But where?"

"Why, they're all in a next-door neighbor's house—Clark, Rutker's housekeeper, and the girl. Dorothy Connell's her name, in case I haven't mentioned it. It seems Miss Connell was at a house party across the bay last night, and the Rutker housekeeper was staying with a sick friend. That gave a clear field for the crime. But they're both sticking close to Clark now, though I understand with considerably different motives."

We took a taxi out to Parnassus Avenue. Meynard seemed disinclined

to discuss the case any further, and I was left to reconcile myself to the twin improbabilities of Rutker's death and Clark's guilt. It wasn't so difficult, for the former was an indisputable fact, and I had Meynard's assurances concerning the latter. True, Clark didn't look a criminal; but it would be as fair to hang men on their looks as to declare them incapable of crime on the same basis. Some of the worst men I have known—but I'll stick to this case, which certainly furnishes arguments enough against trusting appearances.

Coming to the place where the Rutker house had stood, we found a ruin of ashes and a few charred timbers. Mighty few, for it had been a swift, hot fire. But it had been drenched so thoroughly that it was quite cold, and three policemen were poking around in the ruins. I supposed they were on a chancy search for evidence. A patrol wagon stood in front of the ruins, and at the next house Inspector Clifford himself answered the bell.

Clifford had been glad enough to work with Meynard on several previous cases, but now he seemed seriously annoyed.

"Good morning, Meynard. And you, Waring. Well, I'm meeting you as I promised, but I'm not sure I shouldn't be placing information against you, instead. You've got yourself in pretty bad on this case."

Meynard smiled in his disarming way.

"I know. Accessory before the fact, isn't it? All I can do now is to try to convince you that I was justified. And fulfill my agreement with Rutker by pointing out the murderer. Have there been any developments since I phoned you? For instance, has the body been positively identified?"

"Oh, yes. By Rutker's dentist. Luckily, Rutker had a lot of work done lately, and the dental records give a complete description of his teeth. Not

that there was any doubt, but it was the only sure identification, considering the condition of the body."

"Anything else?" persisted Meynard.

"Well, the old housekeeper's sure Clark did it. She tells of a furious quarrel Clark and Rutker had about a week ago over Clark's attentions to Miss Connell. Clark admits it, too. Rutker ordered him out of the house, and, according to Clark, he started packing. Then he claims Rutker apologized and asked him to stay. He explains he was in the middle of some intricate calculations that nobody else could finish—something about the movements of stocks."

"Yes, I knew about that quarrel, too. Well, let's go in."

Clifford led us straight to the drawing room. The family who occupied the house seemed to be keeping discreetly out of the way. In the drawing-room, we found Dorothy Connell, Clark and the housekeeper. The housekeeper sat across the room from the other two. The girl's chair and Clark's were close together. It seemed likely they had been closer, for there was a little swift movement from them as the door opened.

Dorothy Connell had certainly been crying. Her eyes were big and strained with distress and horror—and, I thought, fear. The fear, of course, was for Clark. Clark seemed uneasy and angry. He must have felt the coils of evidence tightening around him. He acknowledged Clifford's introduction of Meynard rather curtly.

"I think I've heard of you—of the Meynard Detective Agency, anyway."

"'Corrective Agency,'" said Meynard, "but unfortunately the functions are sometimes the same. As in this case. First, I want to tell you how I happened to enter it."

I watched Clark closely while Meynard told his story. He seemed astonished, bewildered, horrified. But he

might have feigned those feelings. However, there was one expression he couldn't feign—an unmistakable look of fear. Dorothy Connell looked stunned for an instant, and then burst out:

"You mean that he—my guardian—expected this? And was willing to—to wait for it? Oh, no! That's impossible!"

"So every one says," replied Meynard; "but a fact's a fact. He not only forecasted his own murder, but he indicated clearly enough whom to suspect of the crime." In his precise, unemotional way, he went on to explain why.

"He spoke of youth in general, but"—with a glance at Dorothy Connell—"he could have been one person in mind. I assured myself of that; there was no one else he was interested in. He meant to safeguard you, Miss Connell—against what danger? How could his death and the discovery of his murderer protect you?"

The girl's frightened, involuntary look at Clark was a sufficiently clear answer. Clark met her eyes, tried to reassure her with his own, and then, with a sudden loss of control, burst out violently:

"I'm tired of this beating around the bush. Rutker's dead and I'm not saying anything against him—not till I have to. But it's me he meant, I suppose. She was engaged to me; he was against it. The only 'danger' she was in, from his point of view, was marrying me. I didn't kill him, but if you can hang it on me, she'll be saved from that 'danger,' all right."

"'Danger,'" echoed Miss Connell, leaning toward him. "But why do you say we *were* engaged? We are."

Meynard's smile at both of them was almost like a benediction, in queer contradiction to the ruthlessness of his words:

"So your motive is established. Miss Connell is an heiress, and she would

lose her fortune if she married without Rutker's consent." Clark glared at him in speechless anger. "As for Rutker's motive in permitting himself to be killed, that you might be caught, some of you may think it insufficient. But who has ever estimated the strength of hatred and jealousy, balked desire and love—or perhaps only middle-aged possessiveness? For isn't it true, Miss Connell, that your guardian wanted to marry you himself?"

The girl gasped, but nodded; and Clark grew white. I heard the house-keeper behind me mutter confirmation to Clifford. As for me, I stood there wavering between belief and disbelief. I recalled Rutker, commonplace but stubborn, dull but tenacious, "Investment Banker," usurer no doubt, avaricious, egotistic, self-willed. But above all things possessive—possessive; that was the keynote of him. It seemed to me I could see him considering some such revenge as this, but I couldn't see him abandoning his life to gain it.

I said something of the sort, but winced before Meynard's half-mocking look. It seemed to accuse me of being influenced by beauty in distress—that is, by Miss Connell.

"So much for Rutker's motive, as it would sound before a jury," went on Meynard. "A great deal could be made of it, I think. And of your opportunity, too. But, of course, all that isn't proof. And it's proof that Rutker needed. Proof that he hired me to supply. And that I will supply, John Clark."

Clark merely glared at him. There were several obvious retorts he could have made, but he made none. It came to me that he was either innocent or a very clever crook simulating innocence. An ordinary rascal would have been babbling abusively by now.

"For instance," went on Meynard, "in your very clothing—— But it's too soon for that." Meynard looked at his watch. "In about two minutes now

some one will be here with—— They tell me you've been at work on a book for the last year."

"I have," said Clark surlily.

"A year's a long time—to youth. It would be hard to waste a year. And a book—doesn't a book become a part of you? Your ambitions, too—you'd pinned a lot of hope on that book. No wonder you decided to save it from the fire and——"

"Save it!" cried Clark. "My God! I didn't save it. I tried to hard enough, but it was in the study downstairs, and it was all in flames when I woke up. You're as far off there as you are about everything else."

"And, I may say, no farther," said Meynard grimly. "There was something else, too—a Satsuma vase. You valued that pretty highly, too. Your only family heirloom, wasn't it? The Empress Dowager of China gave it to your father for certain services in 1900. Your father hadn't your mathematical mind; he was something of an adventurer. The vase was also in the study. It would be hard to lose that vase."

"You seem to have meddled a lot with my affairs; but it is hard to lose it."

"So you decided not to—— Come in."

Some one had tapped at the door. It opened and one of our own men entered, an operator named Hendricks. He said nothing, but simply crossed to Clark and handed him two objects. One was a vase perhaps two feet high—a beautiful iridescent thing. The other was a sheaf of papers a couple of inches thick.

"Your book, your vase," said Meynard.

I heard Clifford, behind me, draw a sharp breath. I think he hardly needed anything more to be convinced of Clark's guilt. Dorothy Connell cried out something sharply, in pure amazement. Her belief in Clark wasn't

shaken yet. Clark seemed stunned. It was half a minute before he stammered hoarsely:

"Where—where did you get these?"

"Where you put them, of course. In the loft of your uncle's garage."

"But I didn't!"

"Come, come! Who else would be interested in saving them. But there's another thing. Let's get this over quickly. Mr. Clifford, I don't guarantee any find, but I'd like to have Clark searched very thoroughly."

Clifford was eager enough to do that. He suggested the patrol wagon outside, but Clark offered to lead him and Hendricks to the bedroom which the owners of the house had set aside for Clark. The wait was rather dreadful as far as I was concerned. Dorothy Connell was so desperately frightened and trying so hard to keep up an unafraid front! No one moved or spoke until there came another knock at the door. Meynard opened it, admitting one of the policemen who had been searching the ruins. In his hand he carried the blackened metal parts of a small revolver.

He asked for Clifford, and said he would wait for him. The next minute the door opened again and Clark came in, followed by the two who had searched him. One glance at Clark's agitated face told me that something important had been found, but I wasn't prepared for the exultation in Clifford's voice.

"Meynard, you said you were working to prevent a crime, but I don't see much that's left to prevent. Seems like Clark couldn't have pulled off very many more. Murder, arson, probably robbery, and now—this!" Clifford held up and flourished a large sheaf of yellow-tinted bills.

"Ah!" Meynard didn't seem at all surprised. "What's that, Clifford?"

"Counterfeit! Twenties! Nineteen six! An issue we were warned against,

a month ago. One that's been scattered all over the East—hundreds of thousands of dollars of it. Almost perfect—takes an expert to detect it. I probably couldn't tell one myself from the genuine article; but when I find fifty, all of the same kind, in the lining of a man's coat—— Meynard, this is a big grab!"

The policeman approached him and began whispering to him. Clifford listened to him almost carelessly. I could see he felt as I did, that further evidence against the prisoner was quite needless. Dorothy Connell came forward and took Clark's hand; her confidence was quite unshaken. Clifford took what the fire had left of the revolver and turned again to Clark.

"You've already told us you hadn't any gun. Never carried one, never owned one. Yet this was found in the ashes of your room. It was found, in fact, on top of the springs of your bed. It's of the caliber with which Rutker was killed. Put that on top of all the other evidence. Come, come! You might as well confess."

I thought so, too. The discovery of the counterfeit money had certainly strengthened both Rutker's motives and Clark's. It was probably because Rutker had suspected him of counterfeiting that he had been so anxious to save Dorothy from him. And probably Clark knew that Rutker suspected him, which was an added reason why he should kill Rutker. Of course, there was a lot in that theory that needed added explanation, but I thought it was the true one. And Clark's angry denial didn't impress me at all.

"Confess, the devil! I've told you before I don't know anything about the killing. I don't know anything about the counterfeit money. I never saw it or that gun before. If these things were found in my uncle's garage, I didn't put them there. As for Miss Connell——" He broke off.

"We were going to elope, anyway," put in the girl, with a desperate show of triumph. "So he couldn't have killed Mr. Rutker because of me. It was something else."

"Yes, but your money"—I thought Meynard might have spared her that—"you—and he—would have lost it."

"My money! Oh, you—old men! Do you think he would have killed for that. Never—never—never!" She held tight to Clark.

"Then you still believe in him. He should be grateful to you." Meynard's eyes were glowing oddly. He glanced toward the door, outside of which there seemed a slight movement. He raised his foot as if to tap the floor, but instead, put it down softly.

"Youth believes," he said. "Sometimes old age believes again." He turned abruptly to Clifford. "I promised to supply you all the evidence you needed against Clark. Are you satisfied?"

"More than satisfied," returned Clifford, still exultant over the discovery of the counterfeit money.

"And are you satisfied with my reasons for standing aside and letting events proceed?"

Clifford's face clouded.

"Why, as to that—no! I'm afraid I'll still have to lay a complaint against you, Meynard."

Meynard made a regretful, clucking sound with his tongue.

"Too bad! Too bad! In that case, I'll have to hold you a minute longer, though I can see you're anxious to take away your prisoner. Though as to that, are you sure the case is complete against him?"

"Sure? My Lord! What more would a jury want?"

"Well," said Meynard, "they might want the *corpus delicti*. Rutker's body, that is."

He spoke so casually that for a moment none of us got the meaning of his

words. When we did, we stared, and Clifford burst out violently:

"His body! What you driving at? It's in the morgue. Didn't I tell you? Positively identified by his dentist."

"Pardon me. Yes, you did. I am getting forgetful." Indeed, he talked for the moment like a very fussy old man. "But there's another thing a jury *might* want to know. That vase and manuscript—who besides Clark might have hidden them where my men found them? Who might have planted the gun in his room? Who might have concealed the counterfeit money in the lining of his coat? Could any one but Clark have done those things?"

I didn't realize till then how much I was really sympathizing with Clark and the girl. For, of course, nobody could have prepared all that evidence against Clark but some other member of Rutker's household, and the old housekeeper was probably as little to be suspected as Dorothy Connell herself.

Clifford said all this, at greater length.

"True!" agreed Meynard. "I was only asking." He did seem very weak and old. "But you forgot one person. There's Rutker himself. He was so *very* anxious that Clark should be punished for killing him——"

Clifford stared at Meynard as though he thought him mad.

"Rutker! Why, damn it, man! Did you ever hear of a man that's to be murdered planting evidence against his murderer beforehand?"

"As it happens," said Meynard mildly, "I have. And Rutker was a rather extraordinary man. And in an extraordinary predicament. I think I told you I gave him routine twenty-two. The things we uncovered! Oh, the curious things!"

Again, as Meynard looked around at us, there came the sound of a sudden movement outside the door—a movement which seemed to be swiftly

and violently checked: But I, for one, gave it no attention. I was too intent on Meynard, and I think the rest were the same. Clifford rasped out impatiently:

"What did you uncover?"

"That he'd embezzled from funds intrusted him—and then made good the stealings. That he'd mortgaged his clients' properties—and then paid off the mortgages. That he'd gambled and gambled and gambled and almost invariably lost—in spite of your figuring, my friend"—to Clark. "That he——"

"But if he kept on losing," cried Clifford, "how did he pay back his stealings?"

"Ah, *that*, now—that's the interesting thing. That brings me to why I suspected *he* might have planted the counterfeit money on Clark. Because he was really head of the ring of counterfeiters, you know. A profitable business, a dangerous business, a nerve-destroying business. That was why, with everything straightened out, he made up his mind to disappear."

"To disappear?" Clifford's voice was challenging; he seemed to suspect some trick. "But he didn't disappear; he's in the morgue. And it wasn't suicide, I tell you."

"I said 'disappear,'" replied Meynard. "I mean by that simply—flight. But one thing held him—or shall we say, many. Love, hatred, jealousy, stubborn possessiveness. Miss Connell's fortune is intact; it was arranged so he couldn't manipulate it. If he left there would no longer be an obstacle to her marriage with Clark. He *must* leave, but he couldn't leave Clark triumphant. So he arranged to leave him—a felon, instead."

"But you said you didn't mean suicide."

"Nor did I. You see, Rutker was a dentist before he became a financier; and at this moment he is outside in the hall, in charge of two of my men."

It was a little abrupt. I sprang to support Miss Connell, but Clark was ahead of me. She recovered from her faintness almost instantly, but Clark didn't release his hold. Clifford whirled for the door, but Meynard stopped him.

"Wouldn't it be as well to wait?" Meynard jerked his head toward the girl.

I was glad that Clifford agreed. I myself had no desire to see Rutker just then. Clifford fell to more eager questioning of Meynard; but the only new thing brought out—except some detail about the capture of the counterfeiters—was the method by which Rutker had procured the body which he had tried to

pass off as his own. The explanation may suggest itself; I prefer to pass it over. After all, there are plenty of dead bodies. More gruesome than the mere procuring of the body must have been Rutker's dental work, whereby he had not unreasonably thought to completely identify the stolen body as his own.

No; as I have said, I had no desire to see Rutker just then. I was remembering the crime "worse than murder" that Meynard had prevented, the world's "deadliest sin" as Meynard calls it—the sin of destroying the hopes of youth. Meynard may be a fanatic on that subject, but I don't violently disagree.

Other stories by Robert J. Pearsall will appear in future issues.



BOYS AND THEIR BUNDLES

SIXTY years ago a Boston boy was earning the munificent sum of six dollars a week by working all day wrapping bundles and a part of the night as a stage "super." He was E. F. Albee, and to-day the bundles he wraps are bundles of money, for he is head of the Keith-Albee-Orpheum Corporation, a sixty-five-million-dollar affair, and operator of the biggest chain of stage theaters in the country.

Twenty years ago a young man found himself with his arms full of a bundle of trouble. He was William Fox, the new proprietor of a penny arcade in Brooklyn. While negotiating for the purchase of the business, he had hung around the place for three days and noticed that it attracted good crowds. Having bought it, he discovered that the crowds which had so impressed him had been made up mostly of people whom the former proprietor had hired to visit the arcade.

But Fox set to work to make the attractions so good that real patrons would be drawn to it. Succeeding in that, he bought several more arcades. From that, he went to leasing theaters, then to building them. To-day he is the head of the twenty-five-million-dollar Fox Film Corporation, with movie studios in both Hollywood and New York and sales agencies reaching around the world.

Albee soon quit his double career of bundle wrapper and stage super and got a job with Barnum's circus. In 1888 he went into partnership with B. F. Keith, a museum proprietor, started a vaudeville business, and broke all theater-building records by putting up in Boston a playhouse that cost seven hundred thousand dollars—in those days a staggering amount.

The rest was, for him and his partner, the sweet drama of more theater building, bigger operations, and steadily increasing money bundles. There are in America to-day no two finer examples than Albee and Fox of the inevitable success of that justly celebrated and undefeated old team, Industry and Vision.



The SWORD OF EVAN

Two Highland chieftains in a fight to the death!
modern writers can do—the splendor and fierce-

EVAN MACRAE called for his horse, and made ready to take the road. If there was chance of real trouble between him and Allan Campbell, he must lose no time in getting the news to his blood brother, Kenneth Mackenzie. A keen brain had Kenneth, though it did drive him at times to brandish a sword all too readily. It was a heavy sword, though not so heavy as Campbell's. Eighteen hundred men Kenneth as Lord of the North could summon in a single evening, if occasion arose.

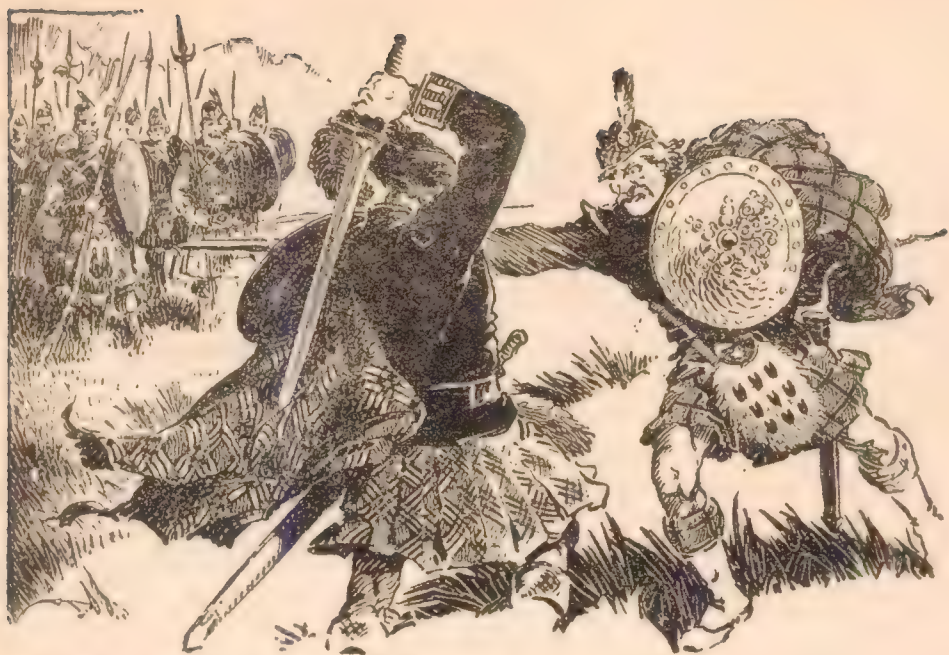
Evan Macrae thought that such an occasion threatened. A storm did not have to break to let Evan know it had been brewing. He could read the signs, and he knew when a wise man should seek protection. Though life

was dear enough to him, his home was dearer still. He loved every stone in the structure of Aultnaharra, and every inch of the ground about it, and every man, woman and child that trod Macrae territory was not only his kin but his care.

"I'll be back before many hours are gone," he informed the clansmen gathered about him, and then he turned to address Charlie McAulay, head of a lesser clan to which his own was allied.

Thirty minutes ago Charlie McAulay had ridden in, asking sanctuary of Macrae against the might of Campbell.

"Aultnaharra must be your home, Charlie McAulay, until our plans are made, and you'd best lie low and let none see you. And let no one," Macrae added, generally, "answer any ques-



MACRAE *By* Meade Corcoran

A tale in which its author catches—as few
ness and reality of the Scottish clans of yore.

tions, no matter who comes asking them."

With Cavack, his deer hound, at his heels, Macrae walked quickly to the courtyard, in which Tam, his horse, stood ready, and was soon heading for Errig, the Mackenzie castle. His lean face was set and expressionless, but his thoughts were in a ferment. Did Campbell really mean war?

It was a queer story, indeed, that Charlie McAulay had come with. Allan Campbell, it seemed, had summoned him to a conference about the rights of salmon fishing in a loch that the McAulays had ever considered their own.

"He had a lantern-jawed tike of a lawyer with him," so Charlie's tale had run, "and the pair of them were nosing in a lot of papers. They began fling-

ing writers' words at me about rights of overlord and rights of occupier, until I could stand no more. So I told them the fishing was mine, whatever King David had said, and it is. Did you or yours ever hear it wasn't, Evan Macrae?"

"How did they try to prove to the contrary?"

McAulay had listened to no proof. He had seen only one thing—that Campbell was wishful to pick a quarrel; and McAulay had replied with a threat of his own.

"Touch my fishing, Allan Campbell," he had thundered, "and I'll come to Carrigard with fire and sword!"

But there were more swords in the Campbell arsenal at Carrigard than Charlie McAulay had conceived in his

whole life, and more hands in the Campbell clan to light the beacon fires than Macrae and McAulay could muster between them in many a long day.

"And what did Campbell say to that?" Evan had inquired.

"He laughed at me—blast his braggart mouth!—and said I'd be clapped under lock and key before I had time to draw sword from scabbard. So I came to you."

Macrae had looked grave, and the other's brow had lowered.

"If my own clan was strong enough, Macrae, I'd not have come to you. As it is, I want only the promise of your men, not of yourself."

From another that might have been an insult, but Macrae knew that McAulay's tongue always moved faster than his mind.

"Where my clan goes, Charlie McAulay, their chieftain goes, too, and no McAulay need ask twice for aid from either."

They had shaken hands on that, and fallen to a discussion, during which McAulay mentioned a fact forgotten by Macrae:

"That any Campbell should pick a quarrel with me, is strange enough. But that it should be Allan, above all! Why, didn't I once save his wife, Helen Lamont that was, from a wounded buck bearing down on her, and she unarmed? And haven't she and I been like fosters ever since?"

"Ah!"

So Allan Campbell was picking a quarrel with a friend of his own wife, and Allan Campbell knew well he could not do that without quarreling also with that friend's ally and protector—in this case, Evan Macrae.

In other words, Campbell was striking at Macrae through Helen Lamont. Now, why should he do the like, unless—— Macrae did not show then the feeling he nursed now. Helen Lamont—her name was music in any

mouth. How many months since his first and last sight of her? He thought of the relations between himself and her husband. Of course, they must come to an open fight some time.

Every one in the Highlands knew of the feud between the two. It had begun when Allan, a guest at Aultnaharra, had tried to steal Evan's deer hound, Cavack, and succeeded only in losing his servant and some prestige.

It had continued when Allan tried to provoke the poorer chieftain by cutting off the tail of his horse, Tam. Evan had avoided a direct battle then, and retorted only by stealing the bull and cows that Helen Lamont had brought as part of her dowry on her marriage day.

The cattle had been recovered by the bride, not by Allan, and the recovery had cost Evan nothing of his dignity. Quite the reverse! It had sent Campbell home with a scalded heart and ears burned by the acid of his wife's tongue. A tongue sharp-pointed as a skian for those she despised had Helen Campbell, born Lamont, and the rumor ran that she did not spare it on the husband forced on her by a family arrangement. But she had spared it on Evan Macrae.

As he spurred his horse toward Errig, the Mackenzie castle, he let his imagination recreate the pictures that had ever haunted him since he last saw her. His gaze was directed vaguely on the distance, and at first he did not know whether he was confusing vision with reality. A copper head shining in the sun and a firm body erect in the saddle. Then a voice clear as a cuckoo's in a spring wood rang out:

"Good day to you, Evan Macrae!"

It was the woman herself in the flesh.

His pulses raced, as they always did even at memory of her, but he replied quietly:

"Good day to you, Helen Campbell!"

She had halted her horse right in the road he must take to reach Errig.

"You're in a hurry," she said, urging her mount in line with his.

"I've business on hand."

"May I guess it?"

"You'd best not."

He did not dare look at her after a first quick meeting with her gray eyes, shining from under a broad, white brow. He stared ahead. What could she have in mind? To surprise his secrets and report them to Allan Campbell? He rejected the thought violently, and yet it tortured him. Deliberately he listened to the chorus of her horse's hoofs beating in unison with his. Let her say the next word! She said it.

"I wanted to be sure you'd take this road." Her voice was low.

He did not answer. And then she said:

"I must be getting back now—to Carrigard."

She laughed, and the note was unhappy. Evan Macrae drew Tam up with a jerk, and she, too, slowed down her mount.

"Good luck to you, Evan Macrae!" She held a hand out.

He hesitated, and then grasped it hard. It was firm and yet yielding. He wanted to cry at her to keep away from him, to let Allan, her husband, and himself fight their fight out between them. Why should their hostility make her unhappy? But her smile was warm, enveloping, and all the tension in him relaxed under her look and her clasp. He smiled sadly.

"Good luck to you, Helen Campbell!"

"We must take it where we can get it."

Now what did she mean by that?

"If we had only ourselves to think of——" Now what was *he* saying?

He spurred Tam to a gallop. Surely it was time to run. He heard a gasp behind him, but could not be certain whether it was of delight or displeasure.

"Hoot, man, get your mind on busi-

ness!" Evan reproved himself as he rode away. "If Campbell comes hunting war, it will be serious business enough." But it was hard to keep his mind to a straight course. Always it zigzagged when Helen Lamont was involved.

Clouds gay and ragged as a pile of tattered plaids were wheeling and whirling over the autumn hills, driven by a wind that gave more than a hint of winter.

A red sun was setting the west aflame, as he rode into Errig.

He had to accustom his eyes to the gloom, as he entered the great hall in which Mackenzie sat with his clansmen at table. Towering, Kenneth rose, offering a hearty handclasp.

"Welcome to you, Evan Macrae! Have you eaten?"

"No, nor hungry."

"What could take a man's appetite on such an evening?"

Eyes, bright and fierce as an eagle's, scanned Macrae's face from either side a haughty, beaked nose.

"The salmon is fresh caught," he said. Then, quietly: "You'll be the better for a bite or two. Sit here."

Evan Macrae laughed shortly, as he took the place made vacant for him beside his host.

"Does the salmon come by chance from Loch Corrib?"

"And why shouldn't it?" Mackenzie had a quick ear for tones in a voice he knew.

"Would you have me eat food that Allan Campbell claims as his own?"

There was the silence of astonishment about the table. Mackenzie's brows shot up, and he pursed his lips as one who felt like whistling, but no sound came.

"Fetch a clean platter, and put another salmon on the fry," he ordered a servant. "Your health, Evan Macrae!"

They pledged one another in whisky.

"Eat first and talk after." The Lord

of the North laid down his dictum. "Here, Cavack! Your belly can do with a bite, too."

Cavack came to him, tail wagging, and Mackenzie asked:

"Shall I order fresh heather for your couch, Evan Macrae?"

"No, I can't tarry too long," replied the other.

They discussed indifferent topics, until Macrae had almost ended his meal. Then, with a glance, Kenneth Mackenzie told his clansmen they could retire, and the chieftains were left together with but an attendant.

"And now, Evan Macrae, what's this talk of salmon?"

"I go shortly to fight Allan Campbell—or I'm going daft."

"So it's come?" Mackenzie showed no surprise.

"I'll not say 'Yes' until you hear me."

He told his story without interruption, and Kenneth listened with ears alert and frame relaxed.

"Why should Campbell fight you now?" Mackenzie asked at last.

"I stole his bride's bull on his marriage night."

"But he got it back."

"She did—not he."

"But man and wife—aren't they one, Evan Macrae?" He put the question slyly with a smile in his eye.

"So they tell me," answered Macrae slowly, lids drooped the better to avoid the other's look. "But how should I know? I've no wife."

"Aye, how should you, or I either? I married a sweetheart, when they said I should have made a match."

The sweetheart was dead now. He sighed, and silence fell between them. A dog stretched and yawned. Something spluttered in the fire and threw a fitful gleam about the ceiling. In the wavering light two profiles were visible on the walls—one, high-nosed, imperious, with the blunt, bullet head of the fighter; the other, long, slim, with the

daring sweep that bespoke the brain unafraid of ideas.

It was the fighter who spoke first.

"Campbell wants fight—that's clear."

"I was right," said Macrae softly. "And when he does——" He drew a deep breath. He knew what that might mean. He could see in his mind's eye the onward march of the countless clansmen, led by their boar's-head-crested chieftains. Campbell, Argyle, Breadalbane! He could see the dark blues and greens with their threads of yellow, coloring the earth for miles around with Campbell colors. Ahorse and afoot they would come, flooding the grounds of Aultnaharra. With torch, sword, musket, maybe cannon, they would come.

If he could but meet Allan Campbell alone and lose his life, perhaps, but save his clan! Involuntarily, he uttered the wish aloud.

Kenneth Mackenzie threw back his head and roared with laughter. He was in his element already, sniffing smoke and hearing swords clang.

"You did well to come to me, Evan Macrae. Stop dreaming, man, of the delight you'd take in running a knife through his gizzard, and tell me what move you think he'll make next."

Macrae reflected, looking straight before him with set face.

"He'll come demanding Charlie McAulay; of course, and he'll come maybe armed with a commission in his pocket from the English privy council, entitling him not only to take Charlie but to declare him and them who aid him rebels against the king."

Kenneth Mackenzie nodded in agreement, and took up the tale:

"And you'll tell him to go to hell, but he'll have brought the hell with him. Now, listen to me, Evan Macrae, and listen well."

He outlined a plan, at which his guest first gasped and then laughed, slapping his knee with hearty approval.

"You approve it?" Mackenzie yelled delightedly. "Your health!"

They clinked glasses, and at the noise Cavack awoke from a well-fed doze, running to his master.

"Maybe the end, Cavack lad, of what you started!" cried Evan.

The plan was nothing less than the immediate calling of the allied clans to arms—Mackenzie, McAulay and Macrae.

"Campbell can't come to Aultnaharra before the morrow, or, if he does, he must return to-morrow to talk with you. To-night we get our men assembled. A warm welcome he'll find before him, Evan Macrae!" Mackenzie's voice rang with enthusiasm. "Now look you!"

With a wet finger tip Mackenzie drew on the table a map of the ground about the Macrae home. There was to the south the bare hill of Scalp, the hollow before which was ever the meeting place of the Macraes when danger threatened. Scalp was the highest peak of a small range rutted with ravines and defiles, from which an army, debouching suddenly on an enemy, could calculate at least on causing dismaying surprise.

"You can take your men and post them openly in the corrie and on the hill, Evan Macrae." Kenneth Mackenzie knew the ground almost as well as its owner. "Cover even the McAulays in Macrae plaids, Evan, so Campbell won't have a hint that we're all out. I'll creep with my men over the hills and down into the ravines. When you want me, give your bird call, and we'll come sallying out."

He rose and strode about the room, restless as a horse feeling the check before a race he knew he must enter.

"God, 'twould do my heart good to trounce that braggart Allan, until he had to howl for mercy! Heaven send he give us the chance!"

At the last words Evan Macrae looked thoughtful. He, too, itched for

an opportunity to try a fall with the Campbell chieftain. But war between the clans! That was another matter. He must do nothing to provoke that if it could be avoided. Too often he had seen a clan small as his own almost wiped from the face of the earth, however powerful its protector.

"Suppose Campbell comes only with his rat-faced lawyer and his commission from the council?" Macrae asked.

"That's all you'll see, man, at first, but you'll see the rest in his eye and his bearing. And do you think he'll come expecting to take Charlie McAulay?"

"Man, he's not lost his reason."

"And do you think he'll come," went on Mackenzie, "giving you fair warning that he means to let his dogs loose on you? His dogs will be in leash behind him, near by. Not Argyle or Breadalbane on the morrow, for he must show them cause, and good cause, for taking to the field. No, he'll come with his own men—and he has more of them than you or McAulay, and he'll come thinking to end you both before you have time to draw breath."

Mistaking the other's calm, Mackenzie thumped the table until dishes and glasses clattered.

"He means to end you, Evan Macrae! Take my word for it. But he'll find me before him with you, and he'll rue the day he ever roused me—damn his black, treacherous soul!"

"Aye, he'll rue it."

Convinced of Mackenzie's clear-headedness, Evan Macrae arose and looked his friend in the face. They had often helped one another in small affairs, but never in one that demanded the full strength of their forces. All the fire in Macrae—and it was as hot as that in Mackenzie—glowed in his eyes. At the light in them, Mackenzie put out a hand.

"You're a queer card, Evan Macrae," he said quietly. "God knows why I like

you, but I'd fight for you, kin or no kin."

"And I for you, Kenneth Mackenzie."

"Well, you'd best be going now. We've work to do this night. Good luck to us both!"

Macrae gathered up the armor he had laid down while eating.

"My men will be at their posts by dawn," he said.

"And mine not much later, if that. You'll have to ride hard."

"I can, when pressed."

The clansmen were gathered in the courtyard. They had no need to be told what was in the wind.

"Up the Macraes! Up the Macraes! And to hell with the boar's crest!" they yelled at Evan as he mounted.

He shouted back a greeting, putting spur to Tam's sides.

A wild ride through hills and hollows, but horse and man needed no lantern to light their way. Macrae's thoughts ran faster than Tam's hoofs. Could he trick Allan Campbell into a personal encounter? The unexpected show of strength might be a help or a hindrance, so far as saving the clan was concerned. He chuckled as he thought how astonished Allan would be. He could never think as fast as Kenneth Mackenzie with his addled pate. God look down on Kenneth Mackenzie and on them all!

"The die is cast," Evan told himself. "No end to be served by thinking of what may be. What will be, will be. We can but do our best."

He found his household, wakeful, awaiting him. Campbell had not come as yet. They had had rumors of this and that, but all seemed to agree there were no signs of runners being sent to Argyle and Breadalbane. They showed no surprise at Evan's news that the fiery cross was to go that night through Macrae and McAulay land.

"Do we fight Allan Campbell, Evan?"

"That's as may be. We'll be ready for fight."

Up went their bonnets and their voices.

"The tarie, Evan Macrae? Who takes the cross to-night? Will Mackenzie come out? Do we march on Carrigard, Evan?"

They hurled excited questions at him, but he quieted them with uplifted hand, and unfolded the plan conceived by Mackenzie. They had little stomach for the strategy, but they knew they must do as they were bid.

Lord send it come to the knife! Too long had they waited to run a Campbell through. Should they light the beacons along the hills?

No, no beacons. They were not out to attack Campbell. They were only planning a surprise for him.

At that they roared with laughter. Welcome to you, Allan Campbell! No sweeter sight than your face had been seen in many a long day at Aultnaharra!

But to business!

"Duncan here shall take the word to the McAulays. No, Charlie, you don't set foot from the house to-night." Macrae laid down the law for the assembly. "Can you run hard to-night, Duncan?"

"Aye, with a heart and a half, and no hare ever faster."

Macrae smiled on the little gnarled man, his trusted servant, fleet of foot, sound of judgment. Duncan could keep his own counsel and yet convince the McAulays that Evan Macrae knew what was for their good.

"And Ian here." Macrae selected a young man, lithe as an osier, long legged as a fawn. "Ian shall take the cross."

Ian's eyes shone with the ardor of a disciple chosen by a master for a special test.

"We meet in the corrie by Scalp, Ian. Bid them all speed."

And now the cross was brought forth, fashioned only that day by an old clansman, wise in his generation and the ways of men. Of yew it was, roughly hewn. Their chieftain took it, and solemnly lighted one end of the crosspiece. He held it aloft, and it blazed no more brightly than his own eyes, and his voice was resonant as he spoke.

"Cursed be the man who comes not in answer to this call! Never more shall he find in our hearts kindness, nor on our hearths a welcome awaiting him. To the stranger must he go henceforth in his need."

It was rarely that Macrae thus addressed his clan. He was their friend before their chieftain. They heard him in a devotional silence, and not until he had given the cross to Ian did they voice their excitement once again. The hall rang with their huzzahs.

The runner was sped on his way with cheers, cheers for their chieftain, cheers for himself. Then Ian and Duncan were gone on their different roads, and the others fell to polishing muskets and pointing knives. The smithy fire flared in the night, and the anvil rang.

Crisp air, clear skies, and earth firm after summer drought. Ian was sure-footed as the deer on the down grade, swift as the hound on the rise, nimble as a fox dodging through thickets. Only his nose told him the road, for the stars just blinked in the heavens, too weak to cut the screen of a wood he met. Could he make ten miles in an hour? They said Breadalbane's runners had covered the thirty-five of his territory in three. That was a record to brag about. Macrae had no such ground to cover. He himself had but six miles to Alastair's, his stopping place, where he must pass the cross on. He reached it with even breath.

"Up Macrae! The cross! The cross! Who's fleetest of foot to carry it farther?"

They came running from their huts at the noise of his voice and knocking.

"Shamus! Shamus! Gird yourself, man, and go."

Not till the runner was on his way would they ask a question.

"We meet by Scalp!" yelled Ian. "Speed, Shamus! Evan Macrae says, 'Speed'!"

Shamus was gone, the charred cross aloft in his right hand. The women fell to clacking. The men ran to their homes. Macrae was calling. No time to ask why. No time to do more than snatch target and sword from the walls. No time for more than a back-thrown cry of "God be with ye!" to bride or bairns. Forgotten the fields, where the crop stood, half harveted. Forgotten the herds and their homes.

In tens, scores, hundreds they came pouring to the hollow on which Scalp fronted. Blue bonnets set firmly on their tousled heads, claymore slung from left hip, dirk through the belt on the right. Over the shoulder hung the target. Some among them had guns, with bayonets inserted, and steel pistols. Others carried quivers full of arrows, long-handled pikes, even battle-axes. No weapon was left behind. And from the right shoulder of each man hung his tartan. Macrae's colors—red, blue, green, with a fine pin stripe of pure white.

So it was Allan Campbell they were going to meet? What sweeter could they want? Didn't they know well how he had tried to trick their chieftain out of Cavack, the grandest hound in the Highlands—and Campbell a guest of theirs at the time? But he had got his bull back. That had stuck in their craws. He had caught a tartar, it was said, taking a wife. More power to her tongue and arm! But that didn't help Macrae pride. If Evan had managed to keep the bull now and maybe a cow or two! But he hadn't, and there was a score to be paid.

So they chatted, some squatting in the hollow by Scalp, some leaning on their pikes or guns, and others wandering restlessly. But the wisest among them, wrapped in their plaids, were lying in the heather, taking what rest they might. They might need it with the dawn.

The dawn was already coming. They could feel the chill even before they saw the dark giving way to gray. The sky was the color of brightened steel, when suddenly a cry went up. Every man jumped to his feet, and a piper set to skirling. Bonnets flew into the air, and a cheer rose to the heavens. Banners waved.

Evan Macrae had come.

Two feathers distinguished his bonnet from those of his clansmen. For the rest he was clad like them and armed with claymore, dirk and musket. He greeted them, and then ordered them to their posts. They would station themselves on the hill, hiding behind anything handy.

"Not until I give the call, must a man be seen. But ye won't have long to wait, I'm thinking."

He watched, while they ranged themselves over Scalp. Not a dent or a dip in the rise but they knew, and there were boulders and bushes aplenty. In their shadow they found shelter, passing from sight as if melted into the landscape. Not even the sun rising to its full strength could reveal them. And none too soon did they disappear.

For even as Macrae rode back to his residence, he heard the *clip-clop* of horses approaching and glimpsed some figures through the trees. Allan Campbell himself was coming with the broad day.

"Go you to Aultnaharra, and tell those who seek me they can find me at the foot of Scalp," Evan ordered the servant trotting at his horse's heels.

Slowly he rode back the way he had come, and waited.

Magnificent as the might of his combined clan was Allan Campbell, clattering into the open. The stones and metal points that studded his target gleamed on his shoulder like a small sun. His eagle's plume waved in the breeze, and on his bonnet the boar's head was conspicuous. Light was reflected from the jeweled head of his dirk and the burnished basket handle of his broadsword. He had a bodyguard about him, all well accoutered, and he stopped ten paces from Evan Macrae.

"I come seeking a fugitive from justice—Charlie McAulay. By right of commission from the privy council I am empowered to arrest him. Have you seen hide or hair of him, Evan Macrae?"

He glanced about him as he spoke, at the bare hill before him and the hollow, in which only grass blade and pliant osier moved. His nostrils were distended like those of a charger in the heat of battle, and his eye flashed with pride and defiance. "Now," it seemed to say, "my enemy at last is delivered into my hands."

But from Macrae came a single, mocking syllable: "Eh?"

Campbell's head jerked in angry impatience.

"Those harboring Charlie McAulay had best look to themselves!" he belowered. "To harbor a rebel is to become a rebel."

"Aye," said the other.

Their glances met, and the gray, expressive eyes of Macrae were scornful. Rage flashed in Campbell's face, and his features tightened, losing their look of carefree confidence.

"Have you Charlie McAulay in hiding here, Evan Macrae?"

"You are always likely to find a blood brother in my home."

The purple mounted to Campbell's full cheeks. He tried to keep his voice even. This time, he had decided when coming, he would be able to intimidate

Macrae, to break through the wall of his insolent reserve, to provoke him to nervous fury, if not to panic. And here was the fellow laughing at him again!

"There are more ways of getting a man than by just asking for him," he threatened.

"You could try them."

"On your head be the blame!"

There was silence, cut by a cry from Evan.

"Up, Macraes!" And he whistled shrilly.

Instantly the hill came to life. From bracken and broom clump, from every hollow and heather tuft, sprang a Macrae or a man clad in Macrae plaid. Not a sound did one utter. Not a move did he make after that first leap to life.

"Ah!" The sound came from Campbell's throat in a low note of content.

So Macrae with his miserable hundreds was loon enough to challenge the strength of Carrigard! A smile spread slowly over the full, well-fed face.

"Do I get time to call my clan, or must this handful of men and myself meet the full force of Macrae?" sneered Campbell.

"You can call your clan, Allan Campbell, if so be they're not as far off as Argyle or Perth. We've no stomach for long waiting."

"Not so far but a call can summon them!"

"Not even as far as Carrigard itself! I thought you'd not come begging without strong backing!"

Had the fellow lost his mind? Here he was still laughing, with the might of Carrigard ready to be hurled at him any minute. Campbell's head turned to issue an order to an attendant, but Macrae checked him. Now was his chance to force the matter to a personal issue and save his clan. He said:

"Before you summon your men, Allan Campbell, best see what they have to face."

From his throat came the low, complaining note of a whimbrel—the call of a Macrae needing help. It was taken up by the host on the hill, a swelling chorus that filled the air and was echoed and reëchoed softly along Scalp Range.

Tensely, Allan Campbell waited for the answer, and it came—the shrill scream of the eagle. Mackenzie was coming! Campbell knew that cry. Gone was the purple from his cheeks, the defiance from eyes and voice. Trapped again into making of himself a laughingstock for the Highlands and a whipping post for his wife's tongue. Only last night she had taunted him, when he told her his plan of going to fetch McAulay with the full Carrigard force. She had laughed when he explained how the show of his strength would be sufficient to bring Macrae to his knees, and if not, then to the flames with Aultnaharra. He'd make a bonfire to light the heavens! Laughed, she did, at that, until the tears ran down her cheeks. He could have choked her.

But she had been right. Carrigard strength against Macrae and McAulay—that was one thing; but against Macrae, McAulay and Mackenzie—that was another. Had she foreknown or simply foreseen Macrae's move? He saw the Lord of the North debouching from about Scalp, proudly heading his men. Furious, he opened his mouth to fling a taunt, but Macrae stopped him.

"Now will you call your clan, Allan Campbell? Say the word, and I'll halt the march of mine. This is matter between us two. Let's have at it and have done with it."

But there was something about Macrae, small as he was, that shook the bigger chieftain's confidence. Could this be another trap? He hesitated, and heard Macrae:

"That I should live to see the day when a Campbell refused a challenge from a Macrae!"

"Damn your lying mouth! Have at it then, and God have mercy on your soul!"

He rushed, but a yell from Macrae stopped him.

"Kenneth Mackenzie! Here, Kenneth!"

The Lord of the North was close at hand.

"Summon a witness on your side, Allan Campbell. This is a pact. This is a fight between us two, and whatever the issue, we abide by it, and that binds both clans. Do you agree?"

Kenneth Mackenzie was looking at Campbell, fire in his eye.

Allan Campbell agreed, and it was left to Mackenzie and a Campbell follower to arrange the details of the pact. Whether Evan Macrae was killed by Allan Campbell or vice versa, no member of either clan was to consider the result cause for quarrel.

"Now, Allan Campbell!" cried Evan Macrae.

His hand trembling with rage, Campbell drew his sword from its scabbard, and the action cooled his heat. No time for temper now. This was mortal combat, needing a cool brain and a quick eye to figure out vantage and disadvantage. David against Goliath—so it looked to both men. Macrae must depend on superior skill.

High above the shoulder were lifted the huge, double-edged claymores. The targets on the left arm guarded the breast. The chieftains rode at one another. Campbell swung at the face, and Macrae parried. *Clang!* Steel met steel. Campbell's arm, deflected, was raised in mid-air, preparing to strike again. Macrae's, descending from the clash, had touched the other's horse with the blunt tip. Startled though not wounded, it shied, and was checked.

Tam, curveting, brought the fighters together at an angle. Campbell saw his opportunity, slashed, and Macrae had just time to save himself with his tar-

get. They backed their mounts; faced squarely again.

It would be better, Macrae thought, could they battle afoot. Afoot the apoplectic Campbell would have less advantage, for all his height; for he would be like the bull that can only rush and gore and is no match for the nimble-footed toreador.

The blades clanged, and their music rang out vibrant on the silent field. None stirred or spoke of all the spectators gathered about them. *Whing! Whang!* Blow after blow was delivered, was met by steel or target. Skilled swordsmen both. They did not strike at random. But Macrae noted that Campbell repeated ever the same trick. Every time he brought his sword about, he guarded his face with arm swung before it. They could keep swinging and slashing so forever, and neither the better or worse but in the matter of breath.

Their claymores were high in the air again. Campbell's descended. Macrae's remained steady. The blade thudded dully on the wooden target, and then only did Evan strike. With a mighty swing he brought his sword about, and it hit not the man but the horse. There was a choked cry, a gurgle, a heave, and down went Campbell and his mount.

"Up Macrae! Bravo, Evan! Macrae forever!"

The piper was skirling. Bonnets were flying. Men were yelling themselves hoarse. Macrae had Campbell at his mercy. But there was that in Evan Macrae that would not let him hit a man down and he himself up.

"I'll meet you on the level, Allan Campbell. Get to your feet!" he cried.

Slowly the fallen chieftain arose. His movements were as labored as his heavy breathing which came audibly through widened nostrils, and so distended were the pupils of his big eyes that it seemed they must burst from

their sockets. He advanced heavily to meet the man already awaiting him on the ground.

Macrae leaped forward. The flat of his broadsword hit Campbell on the side of the head, made him reel and knocked him to his knees.

"Up, Allan Campbell! Keep to your feet, man!"

Again Evan waited for the other to regain his position, though his followers were yelling to him:

"Cut him down, Evan! He'd do the like. Don't be a fool, Evan. Trust a Campbell and he'll trick you."

It would be easy to finish him off, as he was struggling to the upright, but Evan did not do it. It was too easy—or so he thought. Let the poor, harassed, beaten bull at least have the semblance of putting up a good show right to the end.

Campbell was on his feet, but he seemed to have difficulty in lifting the heavy broadsword to the proper position above the shoulder. Evan's was in mid-air, poised. The target was before his breast, protecting his heart.

Suddenly the limp right arm of Campbell stiffened, and the edge of his claymore cut through the cloth into the flesh of Evan Macrae just above the left hip. He had been feigning weakness, after all! Furious, but still with his wits alert, Evan jumped to the right in time to avoid more than a surface wound.

The Campbell pipes had begun to play:

"The Campbells are coming, hurrah! hurrah!"

So even his followers thought that Allan was winning!

"Fight like a man, not a mongrel, Allan Campbell!"

Even was standing off now, watching the other mercilessly. Campbell,

foiled in his strategy, was quiet. His danger had steadied his brain, and only the rise and fall of his breast betrayed his disturbance. His eyes were wary.

Again both claymores sparkled in the sun, above the men's shoulders. Campbell's came down, cutting an arc in the air, but Macrae's was before it. Completing its curve, it caught Allan's sword from underneath. For a second the chieftains strained, weight contending against tense energy. To Evan it seemed as if he was supporting with his sword the full bulk of his opponent. By simply leaning on him the heavier man could bear him down. Already Evan's muscles ached from the burden. He must take advantage of his quickness of foot and head.

Suddenly he moved back, letting his sword hand drop to earth. Campbell, not expecting such a maneuver and missing the balance which the other's uplifted blade had given him, toppled, regained the upright, swayed. Again his sword was hanging limply in mid-air. This time Evan had no mercy.

He moved to left, to right, to left again, baffling his opponent by the swiftness of his footwork. He was trying to get the claymore in position and pick the point, on which it could descend most surely and fatally. As Campbell fumbled, it came down on the right of the neck, and Allan dropped. His breath came in a long, sighing sound. He was dead.

It was Kenneth Mackenzie who broke the silence that followed.

"I say it was a fair fight. Let the man who doubts my word, step forth now!"

None contested him. Ended was the feud between Evan Macrae and Allan Campbell. Only the wail of the pipes sounded the keen for the Campbell dead.

In an early issue there will be another tale about Evan, chieftain of the Macraes—by Meade Corcoran.

CAPTAIN of the NIGHT BOAT

By Leonard Lupton

With ridicule eating into his soul, Captain Blake clenched his fists on that wild, terrible night, and made river history!

A NEWSPAPER man, two other drunks—that's all right; you're privileged to make a crack like that if you've ever belonged to the pro-fesh—three first-class seamen, and a ship's surgeon, sat at a table in a water-front café and toasted the nearby Statue of Liberty with something which vaguely resembled Russian vodka—merely a soft drink in that particular café.

There was a good deal of talk about this and that and the ships and the sea.

The surgeon was talking of skip-pers he had known. The seamen were drunkenly poetical over the valor of the men who put hull down out of New York harbor.

The newspaper man, a ship-news reporter, was not overly bright, but he, too, added a yarn or so to the growing collection. All in all, it was a congenial night.

The other patrons left them alone. They met, this assorted company, on rare occasions, and those meetings had formed them into a sort of mutual-benefit society which no one ever tried



to crash—that is, not until Steve Blake came along.

Wearing a blue uniform, with gold braid on the sleeve, it was natural that Steve should turn toward this group when he entered the café. After all, there should be a bond of brotherhood between men who trod decks, men who live on the sea or by it—even though those decks be so widely separated

as the deck of a fast freighter in the coastal trade, and the deck of a night boat to Albany.

Steve pulled up a chair. A waiter was at his elbow—more to see what would happen really, than to take an order.

"Yes, sir?" he said.

"Ginger ale," said Steve. "And I don't care if you get the bottles mixed." Translated, that meant: "Lord help you, if you don't!"

The waiter lingered as long as possible, anticipating an explosion, but it did not come until he left to fill the order. It was, at first, a very mild detonation.

The ship's surgeon turned in his chair and studied Steve.

"My good man," he said, "who are you, and why are you barging in here in a private party?"

Steve grinned.

"Sorry," he said in his soft drawl, making no move to exit. "I noticed the uniforms and thought that, perhaps—well, we're all used to a deck under our feet."

The ship's surgeon could not see very well at this hour of the evening, but he did manage to get a blurred view of the gold braid on Steve's arm.

"Lord bless my soul!" he said. "Eh—ah—er—ah, good evenin', skipper. I—that is to say, I didn't catch your name, or the name of your ship. What are you in, sir—the coastal or transatlantic?"

Steve's face sobered, but there was no apology in his voice when he answered.

"Neither," he said, "my command is the *Belle of the Berkshires*—night boat to Albany."

The surgeon's mouth sagged until his chin rested on the top button of his once immaculate uniform. He decided at last, wrathfully, to credit his hearing.

"You—you—well, damn me!" He whirled precariously to motion to his companions. "Fenton! Burwick! Did you hear that? I ask you, did you hear this lubber? He says he's a sailor, and when I ask him his ship, he—he tells me he's captain of the night boat! Fancy! Can you beat it?"

Steve's eyes had narrowed. His gaze was level, meeting that of the surgeon as the seaman turned back to face him with growing wrath.

"Get," said the surgeon, "to hell away from here. What made you think that you could play around with real seamen? Bah! Captain of the night boat!" He shook his head sorrowfully, as if to ask what on earth the world was coming to.

The reporter raised a thick eyebrow.

"Doc's right. Get away from us.

We know the sea; we been to sea, all of us. We're seamen, not no river pilots! We seen shipwreck and disaster; we know what it means to buck a gale. We felt our way through fog from—from Kalamazoo to Timbuktu." He ended his speech there, but broke into song, incorporating the two famous towns into a ditty.

The waiter returned at that moment. Being sober, and not a participant in the party, he alone saw the humor of the situation. Steve accepted the drink, and arose.

"Gentlemen," he said, placing the glass before him, "permit me a toast to the only real sailors on the Atlantic—the stokers on an oil burner!"

This time the detonation cap took effect. The chair scraped under the ship's surgeon. The other seamen and the man who covered ship news came bounding to their feet. In a brief moment there was the prettiest little scrap under way that had ever wrecked a water-front café.

The ship's surgeon was nearest and he struck at Steve first. The reporter came across the top of the table. The three seamen went to the floor in an effort to get at Steve's legs.

Steve jumped. His fist met the reporter's jaw as the reporter came across the table top. A second later Steve was on the table and the reporter was under it. The table swayed, shakily, and Steve jumped. He landed on the hunched seamen and bounded resiliently into the air once more and caught the ship's surgeon, headfirst.

As a final touch, he piled the table on top of the scrambling mess on the floor, threw the chairs on top of that, socked the waiter with a beer bottle, and left by way of an open window, which let him out into an alley.

He ran until he was on the street, and then, slowing to a dignified walk, picked his way warily toward the *Belle of the Berkshires*.

In the shadows of the pier's bulk, he stopped and ran an explorative hand over his uniform. It was serenely compact, untorn and spotless. Good enough. No one need know that the new skipper of the night boat had ever been in a brawl.

He went aboard and sought his cabin on the top deck back of the pilot house. There he sat on the bed, lit a cigar and began to contemplate the evening's activities.

To begin with, he should have had enough sense to stay away from that dive. At least he should have stayed away from the quarrelsome group.

His fists clenched at the thought. So he wasn't good enough to associate with seamen, eh? The fact that he commanded a steam vessel, but on an inland river instead of on the sea, gave him the honorary title of skipper, but none of the esteem that went with the word.

Captain Steve Blake puffed moodily upon his excellent cigar. Once he removed it from between his teeth and scowled at the glowing end. The weed had no savor this evening. By rights, he should have been in a jovial mood, out there on the bridge, pacing back and forth in the moonlight, watching the river traffic with a fine good will toward all mankind glowing within his breast. But that, in his present mood, was impossible, just as it was impossible for him to enjoy the cigar.

He arose at last, aware of a growing tension. Slowly he paced back and forth within the narrow confines of his cabin. What, after all, he wondered, was so disgraceful about steamboating on the Hudson? Good men had come down the river, men every bit as good as those lads who put hull down out of New York harbor. But each time that Steve tried to console himself with this thought, there came back to him the scene in the café. He was a pariah, an outcast among seafaring men.

Once, in his restless pacing, he looked

down at the gold braid which marked his sleeve. An impulse came to him, stirred his finger tips—an impulse which said: "Tear it off! It is worthless. It has no meaning. It is dull mockery."

And yet something stilled Blake's hand. He turned, with the absurd feeling that eyes were boring into the back of his head—strange, unfathomable eyes that glared contempt!

He turned suddenly and walked back to face the picture which stood in a frame on his chest of drawers. It was the face of a fighting man, now dead—the face of the man under whom Steve had served, the former captain of the night boat.

As he looked at the photo, Steve reflected that it might easily have been the features of a fighting man from down under—or the skipper of a whaling ship. But it was only old Cap'n Jonathan, who had stood by through many a storm, who had loved the river, and the life.

Steve Blake turned away. He couldn't face that stern-visaged photograph. Here he was thinking of tearing the gold braid from his sleeve, the insignia of the rank which he had worked so hard to earn! Suddenly he turned back and faced the framed picture. His chin came up, his shoulders snapped back.

"Standin' by, sir!" he said. And it amused him to think that those boring eyes shone suddenly with pride.

Still straight, as a captain should be, Steve Blake stepped out into the night, stepped out to feel a deck beneath his feet. Girlish laughter, on the gangplank below, drew his attention. He crossed to peer down through the gloom. The girl stood on the gangplank, laughing; a man stood beside her.

"Helen," he was saying, "I never expected to see you here. What luck!"

The captain smiled grimly. He had seen that man, heard his voice, but a

short time before. It was the ship-news reporter who had been in the brawl in the café. Somehow he had straightened himself out of his maudlin condition, in time to catch the boat.

"Damned wonder," said Captain Steve Blake, "that he'd go to Albany, as long as the *Leviathan* doesn't run up that far."

The girl was answering now, and the captain bent shamelessly forward to catch her words.

"Why, Harry! I thought that you were due back in the office at this hour."

"I usually am," replied the reporter; "but this is the beginning of my two-week vacation. Some of the boys are meeting me at Albany, and we're taking a jaunt through the Adirondacks. But haven't you had your vacation?"

Captain Blake could hear the soft pitch of the girl's laughter.

"Oh, yes," she answered, "I have. But I'm here on business. I'm doing a 'Sunday special,' and the Old Boy at the desk thought a little first-hand information on night boats wouldn't be amiss."

"Well, well," said Harry. "For the first time since I've known him, I can bestow my heartfelt blessings upon the Old Boy."

They moved on then, probably toward the stairs leading to the main salon; and the captain of the night boat smiled grimly to himself. What a different person that rummy reporter turned out to be when he met a woman! But look—who was the Old Boy? And what was a Sunday special? For a moment he considered the vague terms, and then he smiled. Why, the editor of a New York paper, of course, would be the Old Boy—and a Sunday special would be a feature article on the night boats.

Well, at any rate, somebody in New York could appreciate that there was a little color, a little romance left, to piloting a night boat up the Hudson, even if

mountain-high waves and roaring gales didn't lash and buffet the old, slow side-wheeler!

Captain Steve Blake reached out and patted the rail of the bridge. After all, the *Belle of the Berkshires* was a good old scow. She had done her duty valiantly down the years. She had seen changes.

She had been plowing the blue and somnolent waters of the Hudson long before that narrow gash of a road had circled the old Storm King. She had seen the girders lifted, seen the waters spanned by the Bear Mountain bridge.

The gray, bleak walls of West Point had looked down upon her passing, and she had nosed out of the narrow, tortuous channel between the mountains, to sail gayly past the castle on Bannerman's Island, with its pennants fluttering to the breeze in majestic salute.

Her searchlight, playing upon the shore, had often picked out the casino atop Mount Beacon. And more than once her old hull had pitched and rocked, on a poignant day in June, as the racing shells—count them, seven!—had scooted under the bridge at Poughkeepsie, to tear down upon that last brutal mile of the course.

The captain awoke from his reverie to glance at his watch. He smiled, noting the time; and at that moment the mate came out on deck and went to the rail. The captain watched him lift the lid of the box over the signal control, saw his hand grip the handle. Somewhere inside the engine room a bell dimly clanged, and then again.

Cold and sharp upon the night air, the great bellowing notes of the whistle shattered the stillness, and the *Belle of the Berkshires* moved majestically out of her slip, swung her nose toward the north, and then settled down to the steady throb of progress, en route to Albany. Captain Steve Blake was off on his first trip as commander of the night boat!

The lights of Manhattan slid past. The ferry slips, dim half arcs of light, threw a dull glow upon the murky water. Ahead, far up the river, beyond the last of the congested river traffic, were the dim towers of the new bridge at Fort Washington Park, jutting into the light of the newly risen moon. Captain Blake smiled to himself, thinking that the *Belle of the Berkshires* would sail under the completed span four years hence, just as serenely as she passed under the other bridges up the river.

With a lighter heart Captain Steve Blake moved forward on the upper deck until he stood under the pennant at the forward mast, and there he bent his head and looked down upon the firm, white roll of foam that curled back from the bow. For a time he stood in reverie, the pageant of the river night passing by; and then suddenly he felt a hand upon his arm. He turned to face the girl who had been assigned by the Old Boy to do a Sunday special.

"Good evening, captain."

Steve Blake bowed with a certain gallantry.

The girl smiled at the old-fashioned acknowledgment. She thought him as quaint as the craft he commanded.

"I'm from the *Planet*," she explained softly. "My name is Wentworth—Helen Wentworth. Very glad to know you, Captain Blake."

For a time they stood, elbow to elbow, by the rail, drinking in the glory of the rich, smooth moonlight. The captain had expected an inquisition, a prying into his affairs, into the affairs of the boat, into the intricacies of its machinery; but the girl asked no questions of a direct nature.

It was not until perhaps half an hour had passed and the captain had procured deck chairs for themselves, that he realized that the girl had been draining him of information in a subtle, indirect way.

The captain was amused, quietly thrilled. Often, during his career upon the river boats, he had seen couples sitting thus, in the moonlight. And envy had touched him—a face softly colored, hair wind-blown and free, silken knees pressed tight against the rail—

He shrugged and came back to the present, only to notice that this girl beside him had softly colored cheeks, that her black hair was wind-blown, that a pair of exquisite knees were pressed against the rail, beside him—and Captain Blake sighed.

The girl, without coquetry, reached across and touched his hand.

"There is something else," she said, "that I need to color my story a little—that indispensable factor, romance."

In spite of himself the captain grinned.

"Yes," he answered the unspoken question in her dark, luminous eyes. "There is always romance to be found on the night boats. Why, look at that moon! See how it plays on the Pali-sades; notice the path of moonbeams upon the water." Unconscious of his action, his hand closed over the one which had touched his own. It would have been impossible to have refrained from that gesture. Steve Blake had never seen such a girl before—or rather, he had, and had known in his heart that such a girl was not meant for him. But here, in the magic of the moonlight, with the old, old Hudson purling past their bow, toward the sea, anything seemed possible.

The girl, however, remembered business.

"One other thing, captain," she said, gently disengaging her hand. "Have you ever been on the river in a bad storm?"

"Yes. We expect about ten or twelve days of dirty weather every season. I don't mean, by that, simply rain—but rather, heavy electrical storms, which develop into hurricanes."

"Have you ever been in one, captain? You see, I have my data for the technical part of the story, I have the dash of romance necessary to color it—and now I'd like something swift, something as brutal as a pageant of nature cut loose, to end with a thundering finish, and no pun intended! How about something now, from your own experience?"

The captain recognized the chance to strut his stuff as a hero, but curtailed the notion abruptly.

"When I was mate, on this same old scow," he said, "we ran into a storm up in the narrows, below Albany. It had been just such a night as this, on the lower river. Calm, serene, wonderful, after a hot, depressing day; and then, when most of the passengers had retired, when everything seemed secure, a blow hit us that almost rammed us on the rocks. Captain Marks, who died this past winter, was in command, and he saved us by keen judgment and a natural skill at the wheel. You can color that up, of course, to suit your needs."

The girl smiled.

"Thank you, captain——"

At that moment the patter of footsteps sounded on the canvas-covered deck. It was the ship-news reporter who had been involved in the fracas at the café. He gave no sign of recognition at seeing the captain, but his hand closed possessively over the girl's arm.

"Come along, child," he said. "I've arranged it so you can go below and see the engines, and the stokehole. After that, I'll show you how to block out your story and color it in, then close with a whirlwind finish."

The girl arose, and the captain hoped for a moment that there was reluctance in her action. For the briefest passing second, her eyes sought out his own, and the captain tingled in every inch of his massive, powerful frame. Almost with embarrassment he accepted her proffered hand.

"Thank you, captain," she said simply. "I appreciate your help. I—I hope that we shall meet again——"

With more force than tact, the ship-news reporter led her away. The captain could catch his words.

"Listen, kid," he was saying to his companion, "don't let the uniform and brass buttons go to your head. He's just a river sailor. When I get time I'll tell you about some real sailors I've known, about some real men."

The captain's hands clenched about the deck rail for a moment—and then, slowly, every instinct alert, he raised his head and sniffed. A quickening breeze was lifting from the north. He turned away to look into the heavens, and moved a little to avoid the black pall of smoke and cinders showering from the stack.

A haze had scudded across the moon. Captain Steve Blake shivered. Was he to be given the test on this, the first night of his new command? As if in answer, he heard the sudden *slap-slap* of water high on the bow of the boat. That sudden wind had kicked up choppy waves. The white horses, from the looks of things, would soon be riding on the river!

With the firm, deliberate tread of a thoughtful man, Captain Blake walked forward to the V formed by the meeting deck rails, in the bow. There he rested his arms on the crosspiece and stared straight ahead past the mast, toward that troublesome wind that was whispering down the river.

Once he glanced back toward the pilot house, toward the two men up there at the wheel, but they seemed to be looking over his head, seemed to be watching the river ahead, too; and the captain returned to his thoughtful vigil.

He was aware of the blood in his veins. It was pulsing. He fancied, too, that his heart action was a bit faster, that all the intricate mechanism of his hard body was speeded up by the exul-

tation—and the sudden fear—which had quickened his perception and made him aware of the value of living.

After a time he lowered his head to his arms and stood thus, thinking. Singapore, Shanghai, strange foreign ports; the pearly loam of a lagoon in the South Seas; the bluff, grim coast of Maine; Cape Hatteras and the Horn—places that real sailormen got around to seeing. But he was Steve Blake, captain of the night boat to Albany! What romance could there be in that? Why, in this, his hour of triumph, must a woman come along to show him the hollow mockery of his job? He felt suddenly young, absurdly young, like a schoolboy reprimanded—and then he raised his head and all thoughts save that of his immediate task vanished from his mind.

Lightning had flashed sharply, with ripping terror, in the northeast. Far away, but crowding its heels, the low rumble of thunder shook the Catskills.

Captain Blake stood erect, waiting, and his jaws tensed as that stabbing flash of light once more colored the sky to a creamy crimson. The water was suddenly black beneath the bow, and the path of moonlight vanished like a light snuffed out. Low cumulus clouds crowded swiftly over the horizon, and again and again that throbbing, seering flash of lightning stabbed out of the heavens, to be followed by the rumbling boom of hell in eruption.

Here and there an anxious figure appeared upon the deck—a man, pacing restlessly to and fro, a woman with a small child in her arms, a boy with his hands stuck bravely into knickerbocker pockets, but with lips trembling in spite of childish valor.

Responsibility descended upon the shoulders of Captain Blake. He moved back among these restless passengers and said an encouraging word or two. After a time he passed down into the main salon and was amazed at the num-

ber of people he found there, milling restlessly, sensing the electrical disturbance to come.

He did what he could among them, and then he returned to the deck, and from there to his bridge. Alone, gaunt, not an unheroic figure, he stood facing the wind that lashed his command and rocked it like a tub. Behind him, a little above, he heard the window of the pilot house rattle. A whiff of smoke drifted past his nostrils.

"Looks like a nasty one, cap'n."

Blake turned and looked up to the face of the chief pilot. The man was obviously worried. He had been on the river a good many years.

Blake nodded.

"Yes," he admitted, "there's a blow coming. Watch sharp."

He turned away and filled his own pipe, trying to find solace, reassurance in the fragrance of good tobacco smoke. They were well up the river now. The shores were narrow. Here, there was not the comfortable security of wide water which one found in Haverstraw Bay. Rocks and sand bars jutted out from shore. The lights of the buoys were visible at lesser intervals. A ticklish place to be caught in a blow. Ask the boys who were caught there on the *Mary Powell*, river queen, in the old days!

Captain Steve Blake waited, tense, wondering if this were to be one of those snarling, smashing storms that come down the Hudson perhaps once in a decade, and leave a trail of ruin and havoc in their wake.

But the storm was of short duration. It lacked the smashing impact of a tempest. The drums of thunder beat a muffled roll, and the lightning came at last to be only a trembling finger of light upon the horizon, as it receded with each passing moment, to wreak a vengeance upon some other section or blow itself to naught at sea.

At sea! Captain Steve Blake winced.

A storm such as that which had passed over him would be nothing at sea, nor would the fog which was rolling down the narrows from Albany in the wake of the sudden climatic change.

He sniffed. Often in the past he had known that peculiar, dampish odor which is the smell of fog. Fog! More terrible than any storm—more terrible for the reason that man was meant to live and breathe and see, and not to be smothered under a wet, impenetrable blanket of gray mist.

Captain Blake refilled his pipe, and paced restlessly back and forth. He was now mightily aware of his ship. Below decks, in the main salon, there was merrymaking now, for the storm with its threat of danger had welded the passengers into a unified body of friends.

The crash of thunder was no longer heard; the flare of lightning no longer cast shadows upon the ship; and, to those men and women and children below, it seemed that they had been delivered from possible disaster, and they were happy in the thought.

But on his bridge, the captain knew better, and the knowledge aged him.

The world seemed to have receded. They were floating on space. Indefinite, intangible, the fog writhed about them, clutched at the ship; and the captain, watching for buoy lights, knew a growing terror.

He stood alone, remote, aloof. Some people—impressionable girls, say—would have called him godlike. But Steve Blake was not that; he was, above all, human. He knew what was facing him, out there in the dark, and he felt the same terror that other good men have known in similar predicament. It is hard indeed to fight that which we cannot see.

The feeling grew upon the captain in time that he was fated to come in contact with the hardest task of his career. As mate there had been the comfortable

knowledge that old Jonathan would be there, in case of need, to assume instant command and responsibility. But, as captain, there was no such feeling of safety, no one to look up to. He knew that he must stand alone and shoulder the burden.

Every instinct, within the next few minutes, commanded Steve Blake to stop his ship. Sane, logical reason warned him that it was dangerous to go on. But the river boats aren't stopped by fog; it simply isn't done—and the water continued to curl about the bow.

From time to time the whistle groaned hoarsely, warning all craft of their approach, but even as the whistle was echoing through the muffler of fog, the riding lights of another ship came at them out of the darkness. She passed so close that the wash of the boats mingled almost instantly; and Blake realized that the ship was a yacht—a yacht which had come mighty near ceasing to be a floating palace of happiness.

They had not gone far, when red and green riding lights once more slithered out of the gloom ahead—another yacht. As they passed the third, soon after that, the solution to the mystery occurred suddenly to the captain. This was the river traffic coming back from the historic boat races at Poughkeepsie.

In his excitement of making his first trip in command, Steve had forgotten about the races. Not a college man himself, he had not been as keenly interested in the struggling oarsmen as he might have been under different circumstances; and even now his thoughts were not of the race, of the outcome, but rather of the results that this unusual river traffic might have upon the safety of his ship.

He raised his head and peered out through the fog, and he could vision, as clearly as if the moon were bright upon the water, what must await him there ahead. A river choked with boats

—motor boats, sailing vessels, private yachts, excursion steamers!

Steve Blake groaned inwardly. Heaven above, how could he go on? Must he stand here thus, and watch his ship lunge onward—bear down upon those unsuspecting craft?

A nervousness forced him from the bridge, sent him once more up into the bow, and there he hung like a doomed man, peering ahead with straining, unseeing eyes at what might await him.

From time to time fog whistles would groan their melancholy message out there in the lowering night, and the shrill klaxons of motor boats squawked at his very bow.

"Captain!" The word rang on the moist air, rolled down to the bow of the ship where Steve Blake stood, and brought him to attention. He turned, wondering, and saw one of the pilots beckoning to him. Slowly and with a sense of foreboding, he approached the wheel house.

"Captain," the pilot said again when Steve was inside, "this is getting pretty serious. I've never bucked such river traffic, in such a fog, in all my years on the Hudson. What—what do you think we had better do?"

Without answering, Blake turned and went out. Slowly, uncertainly, he paced the deck. People were crowding up from below now. They had heard the whistles, the klaxons, and something of the truth was once more dawning upon them. This was worse than the storm.

As he circled the deck, thinking hard, the captain was brought suddenly to a halt by the touch of a girl's hand on his arm. It was the young reporter who had come to get a Sunday special.

"Any danger, captain?" she said.

Blake looked at her for a moment and saw that she was not afraid. There was only reportorial interest in her eyes.

"Yes," he said, "yes, I rather think there is. But that isn't for publication!"

The girl was pleased to know that, even in a jam, the captain's habit of dry humor had not deserted him. She studied him for a moment, and then spoke her thoughts.

"It's too bad," she said softly, "that you should be called upon to face a crisis on the very first night. But you will meet it standing, captain. I know you will!"

He looked at her with sudden gratitude. It seemed to him that this attractive girl had shown him the way.

"Thank you," he said softly. "I must leave you now, but I hope to see you later."

He turned away and went to the pilot house.

The captain's presence did something to the pilots. They seemed to feel the assurance that Blake himself had felt, in other years, when old Cap'n Jonathan had come to back him up in an emergency.

It seemed, as time passed, that those few boats which they had met were but the advance guard of hundreds to come. Chartered tugs, strung with lights and banners, steamed importantly past. Small excursion boats, off the Bear Mountain run, wound their way southward toward the city. Once a day-line boat came washing close, almost grazed them, then disappeared into the night.

The pilot was bent forward, peering ahead through the open window. He did not answer; and Steve bent, too, to see what held his gaze. There was a glimmer in the fog, ahead—a slow diffusion of light.

"There seems to be a big one coming," said the pilot. He leaned back, reaching for the whistle cord. The long, throbbing blast of the fog siren bit into the gray, luminous veil.

"Better ring for 'slow,'" said Blake. "That looks like the *Odell*; it's a big one."

That faint luminosity came nearer. It seemed to be still some distance

away, and the pilots were all ready twirling the wheel to get their own craft in the clear, when the ship shuddered gently and then heeled back. The ripping crash of timbers sounded from below.

Both pilots cursed at the same moment, and Steve joined them in blistering language as he hurried from the pilot house, ran across to the rail and peered down. He saw then that the luminosity which held off in the distance was part of a navy vessel. The steel hull, far in advance of the glow of light, had rammed the *Belle of the Berkshires* just aft of the prow. Already a faint list was noticeable. She was undoubtedly taking on water.

Strangely, in that moment, Steve Blake felt no great excitement. It seemed almost as if he had known all along that this was ordained to happen, and he turned calmly as feet pattered on the deck. The passengers were pouring up from below, ripe for panic.

It mildly amused Blake to see that the ship-news reporter was in the lead.

"We're sinking!" he cried. "We're rammed and we're sinking! Let's take to the boats!"

He started for the nearest lifeboat and began to tamper with the davits even as he shrieked his warning. There seemed to be a nervous assurance about him, an air of being a man who knew just what to do.

"Get back from that boat!" Steve Blake's voice was tense. He felt the deck beneath him cant at a little angle, even as he spoke, and his mind was filled with many things; but there was an assurance about him, too, which came of a sudden new and glorious knowledge.

The reporter half turned, looked savagely at Steve, and then called out impatiently:

"Come on! Hurry! Women and children first!"

Steve winced. He knew that he must handle matters abruptly, or certain panic would ensue.

"Shut up, you fool!" he exclaimed, and grasped the reporter by the collar, spinning him around.

The reporter ducked as if expecting a blow, and then suddenly his fist shot out, hooked Steve neatly and rocked him back on his heels.

Hot anger flecked Steve Blake's eyes with sudden red. He knew that in this tense moment he had no time for a rough and tumble, but he knew too that he must stop this fear-crazed man before the contagion of panic spread through all the ship.

He acted swiftly and with assurance. His fist seemed to come from the ground in a rapid, lightninglike smash, and as it caught the reporter, the man who knew all about ships lifted into the air and then thudded inert upon the deck. Two deckhands rushed forward to carry him away.

Steve turned to the passengers who were crowding close, their fear for the moment forgotten in the dramatic tenseness of the scene which they had just witnessed. For a moment the captain looked at them coolly, and then he spoke.

"We have been rammed," he said shortly, "and there is probably some slight danger; but if we remain cool, it is negligible. Break out the life-preservers and stand by. Let no man, under any condition, touch a boat until I say the word." He turned to the mate, standing near. "Mr. Collins," he added, "see that those orders are obeyed."

With shoulders back, chin up, Captain Blake turned away then. He saw that he was clear of the navy vessel, and he knew that they would be in no danger because of the strength of their hull. He called across to them, using his cupped hands as a megaphone.

The navy man was cool, as he an-

swered, but there was a thread of excitement, of tension in his voice, too. He promised to stand by.

At that, Steve Blake made a dash for the pilot house. He had no one whom he could consult. What happened within the next few minutes would either make him or break him.

The ship was canted at a steeper angle now. At the moment of the crash, Steve had known his approximate location: twenty minutes from Poughkeepsie, and no port between here and there. He had his alternative of running her aground, and ruining his ship, perhaps irreparably, or of taking a chance on making port safely.

As Blake stood at the wheel, the second mate charged into the wheel house.

"Part of lower deck and rail and forward cabin gone," he reported breathlessly, "and the hull staved a little below the water line. We've got the mats out. What are you doing, sir? Going to run for it?"

"Yes." Steve's voice was tense. "Get down in the stokehole and keep them at it. Use a gun if necessary. I want all the steam they can give me."

As the second mate left the wheel house, Steve reached for the indicator and signaled "full speed ahead." Already at an angle, and canting sharper each moment, the *Belle of the Berkshires* got under way. Steve Blake held the wheel.

Below, the mats which had been dropped over the hole were forced tight against the jagged wound by the action of the water; but it was inevitable that some should slip past, and that the water that had previously rushed in should play the very devil with the cargo. If it started a slide, there would be no stopping it. The boat would go over, and down.

Even as he held her on her course, coaxing her through the floating jam of lights, Steve wondered if he had taken the right course. It occurred to him

that if he had allowed them to take to the boats, there would have been certain casualties. With such river traffic, in such a fog, the lifeboats without lights would have been crushed like eggshells!

Steve Blake made history that night. Men still tell the saga of his deed, along the water front in all the river towns.

With a fine head of steam on his boilers, a lot of frightened passengers, a rebellious crew, and a sinking ship on his hands, Steve Blake attempted the impossible—he attempted to thread his way through the miles of infested water to the pier at Poughkeepsie.

Godlike now indeed, he stood at the helm of his ship, and in his hands was the strength and the skill to twist that water-logged old hull in and out through the riding lights of all the pleasure ships that came down the old Hudson that night.

The water curled up around the prow, and the white wake widened out behind him. The paddle wheels churned furiously, and slowly, inevitably the ship dipped toward her wounded side. But there was steam in her boilers, and courage in the heart of the man who handled her.

On and on she forged, and behind her the navy vessel had turned to give her protection in case of need. Outside on deck the passengers milled restlessly; but there was no panic, for some of the courage, some of the strength of that man at the wheel seemed to have been transmitted to them, too. Doggedly, they hung on and watched the race breathlessly, not knowing yet which would win, but betting their hope, their faith on Captain Blake.

River craft turned to give them clearance. There was a frantic sound to the hoot of the fog siren that warned of their coming, and soon they were on a straight course, bearing down on the Poughkeepsie pier. The fog was lifting a bit as the wind freshened in the

north, and after a time the shadowy skeleton of the Poughkeepsie Bridge reared its frame on high, and the welcome lights of the river town hung bright and warm upon the river's eastern bank.

She was tipping now, leaning over badly; but her boilers were hot, the water had not got in to wreak damage there—and it came to pass that those upon the dock, watching the race crowd depart, got the thrill of their lives, for suddenly, out of the scattering mist, came a great white hull tipped at an angle—the *Belle of the Berkshires*, with her whistle tied down, making straight for the dock!

It was over then, in a minute. Lines were out, she was fastened to the pier, the carpenters were already at the wound in her hull, and warmly grateful passengers were herding toward the wonderful safety of land. By quick, efficient, fearless action, hundreds of lives had been snatched from oblivion.

Captain Blake, when his passengers were safely off, went below to see what damage had been done. At last, in thoughtful mood, he came on deck and walked out upon the gangplank to the pier, to get off his report to the owners.

The excitement was over, and he felt let down. A fear was growing upon him now, a fear such as he had never known in the performance of his duty. What would the owners say? What would their answer be to this wire which he must send?

Watch for Leonard Lupton's next story, "When the River Shannon Flowed," a tale of the oil fields, to appear in an early issue.

With head bent he walked along the pier, deep in thought, and not until the touch of a hand on his arm aroused him did he look up.

"Why, hello," he said, embarrassed. "Hello. I thought that you were gone."

The girl reporter smiled up at him.

"This was a great story," she said, "a real scoop. It fits in with the news of the race here to-day. It will be featured. I had to go, you see, to wire my story in—but I came back."

The captain looked at her soberly.

"Yes," she said, "I had to come back. I wired your owners. I told them what had happened. I told them of the wonderful thing that you did to-night, of the lives you saved. You see, I had to have their statement."

The captain looked at her, thought how lovely she seemed in her excitement.

"And what did they answer?" he said slowly, almost fearing her reply.

"I shouldn't tell you," said the girl; "but I will. They wired back: 'Captain Blake should be mentioned for the Congressional Medal!'"

For a moment the captain looked at her soberly, and then suddenly he smiled, for the girl held out her hand in a warm, frank gesture of friendship.

Captain Steve Blake forgot, in that moment, that he had ever felt an outcast among men who trod the decks of ships; and, what is even more important, he forgot all about the Congressional Medal.

THE SENATE'S AQUATIC STARS

IF the United States Senate should ever decide to compete for world's championship swimming records, it could put four star performers into the water. Borah, of Idaho; Capper, of Kansas; Hale, of Maine, and Oddie, of Nevada outplunge the seal and outblow the porpoise when, laying aside the labors and dignities of legislation, they disport their Apollolike, though somewhat sebaceous forms, in the pool in the Senate baths.



A DANGEROUS ALIEN

By Percy J. King

A jungle in Bengal. Two men. A murder, craftily plotted,
perfect in every respect——

NOW," said Riley to himself, softly and profanely, "now, the Lord has delivered you into my hands," meaning Singleton, the languid superintendent of Bengal police, who was lighting a fresh cigarette. Then, aloud, selecting a record for the phonograph, Riley remarked: "You'll like this one—Paderewski, playing the 'Moonlight Sonata.'"

The two men sat—amicably enough, so far as appearances go—in Riley's bungalow. It was a lonely place. The room was lit, rather dimly, by an oil lamp; but outside the Indian night was black as sin, and silent as the grave except when the *whoosh!* of a night bird's wings made an eerie sound.

Though the doors were open wide—to catch any breeze the parched heavens might send—they only showed an oblong of opaque darkness; but the sweet, faint scent of jasmine stole into the room, mingling oddly with the odor of lamp oil and tobacco smoke.

Cheng—Riley's Chinese cook—had placed a can of American cigarettes and a bottle of whisky on the table, before he retired to his quarters in the bazaar for the night.

Riley himself, though apparently listening with the air of a connoisseur to Beethoven's immortal melody, was really thinking wicked thoughts. Elderly, undersized, pigeon chested and spindle shanked, with a big nose and a

little, bald head, he cut a comical figure in shorts and a drab drill shirt open at the neck—something like a caricature of a Boy Scout. But, though he was a comical card to look at, the ideas he hatched in that egglike cranium of his were very definitely un-funny.

He was thinking of the highly dramatic coincidence—now, it seemed almost providential to him—of the superintendent of police turning up like this, a stranger, talking, blabbing, letting the cat out of the bag. Was this the stuff of which they made Indian policemen? Listening, while Singleton talked, Riley had wondered. Ye gods, how he talked! Listening was Riley's long suit—listening and thinking.

He was thinking now of all that had been crowded into the last hour or two—though he had already made up his mind what he was going to do about it. But he went over it all again, recalling exactly what the languid, drawling superintendent had said—in that very English, cocksure way of his. Riley went over it all again, deaf to the glorious sonata. And Singleton was only listening to it with a blank air of conventional politeness—his favorite tune was "Ole Man River." Riley, looking at him as he lounged in the long, cane chair, recalled their casual meeting. It was a meeting that raised an issue of life or death.

Singleton had certainly looked as if a meal and a stiff drink would do him good, when Riley chanced to meet him, out for a stroll just before sundown. So Riley asked him in, just to have one—civilly enough.

After they had introduced each other, the superintendent told Riley that he had been out in the jungle all day, trailing a coolie who ran amuck last night and shot the overseer of a neighboring plantation, with a service revolver. It appeared that the superintendent's Sikh constables had drawn a blank so far.

"The blighter's still at large, somewhere out there," Singleton drawled, nodding his pomaded head toward the open doors and the black, dark jungle. "We shall be after him again, in the morning."

But it was later, after dinner—Singleton had been invited to take pot luck, and Cheng had done them rather well—when Riley became suddenly and vitally interested. He began to think that hospitality may be its own reward.

"D'you know," Singleton drawled, "I have a sort of feeling I've met you before somewhere."

Riley looked at him intently, with a fresh interest. There was a half smile on his colorless lips, but he was sizing up the superintendent, weighing him as a possible enemy.

Riley looked him over.

The superintendent was a youngish man who appeared to take himself rather seriously, though there did not appear to be any particular reason—apart from his badges of rank—why he should. His sleepy, blue eyes had a cold, deliberate stare which at times was almost insolent, and he spoke with a faint drawl, mispronouncing his vowels.

Riley knew the type—public school, university perhaps; rather swanky with his thick, groomed mustache, pomaded hair, and khaki cut by a wizard. Riley thought he looked like a sort of warmed-up tailor's dummy. But Riley only said, still with that half smile on his colorless lips: "Yes?"

But, though Riley was smiling—if you could call it a smile—he knew that this reminiscence might be no laughing matter. A fellow with a past like his needs to be wary with a stranger who thinks they have met before.

Riley's past was simply wicked. It was abominable. For this comical little card, with the big nose and the bald head, was a bad man. He was a killer, a gunman, an assassin, one of these

free-lance murderers of this "modern civilization" business. His big automatic could be hired by any thug whose bank roll was thick enough to pay the blood money.

Riley knew bootlegging millionaires of the United States, and oil kings of Tampico. He had shot a half-caste dictator in Mexico City, and sundry prohibition agents, not to mention a few odd policemen. Once—although you would not think it, to look at him—Riley had traversed a spluttering machine gun from the rear seat of a racing automobile in Chicago, making a ferocious get-away from the police, who were only too glad to let him go.

Exactly what he was up to now, on an Indian plantation, was a secret—in-cubating, no doubt, in that comical, hair-less cranium of his.

Singleton's casual remark had shown him the danger signal. True, his villainies had been perpetrated in another continent; but it might be excessively inconvenient, just now, if the Bengal police knew too much about him.

"Yes," the superintendent had said, languidly stretching his long legs in order to admire the classic cut of his own imported breeches, "I'm certain I've seen you before, somewhere."

Riley said: "I don't remember you. Where was it?"

"I can't remember where—not for the moment. I shall get it in a minute. I never forget a face. Yes, I'll swear I've seen you before, but I can't exactly remember where—not for the life of me. Funny, isn't it?"

Though Riley agreed, with a nod of his bald head, he was not thinking that it was at all funny. It might be rather bloody. Then Singleton drawled:

"Traveled much?"

"Usual places. Why?"

"H'm-m—I shall get it in a minute."

"You probably will," the little man remarked dryly. "What about another spot?"

"Eh?" Singleton's mental processes were in labor. "Oh, thanks very much. If I may—— Man huntin's a thirsty business—— By gad! That reminds me of——"

"Cheero!" said Riley steadily, as he drank deep and put the glass down.

"Here's luck!"

The wicked little man added:

"All the luck you need, Mr. Superintendent."

"Same to you. But I say—I've got you now!"

"Sure?"

"Quite. I remember you quite well. Weren't you in Arizona, or thereabouts, once?"

Riley showed signs of strain. The situation was growing tense. And he was not as young as he used to be. He thought quickly. Better find out exactly how much this fellow knew. And then, if necessary, make a plan.

"Yes, I was," he said evenly, with a flick of a cigarette ash—his hands were steady enough, anyhow. "More than once. Were you?"

"Yes. That's where I saw you. I got caught up in a rough-house there once, and you were in it."

"So?"

"Yes. I was driving a car one evening, and, all of a sudden—as they say in the storybooks—I found myself in a hell of a little war! Horses galloping hell-for-leather. Bullets flying around. Well, I distinctly remember seeing you with one of the gangs. You and your friends looked as if you'd been unlucky—you were being hunted along the Mexican border, and it beat fox huntin'. Very odd, meeting you here like this. Straordinary coincidence."

Riley observed—as everybody does—that the world is a small place.

"D'you remember the occasion?" Singleton inquired casually.

"Pretty clearly. Oh, yes. It was just after Dominguez raided Francisco Serrano's place at Cuernavaca. By the

way, what were you doing there, Mr. Superintendent?"

"That's hardly the point, is it?"

"Dunno." Riley smiled, inhaled, blew the smoke out through his big nose. Was Mr. Superintendent going to try to be subtle? With a face like that? "I was only wondering if this confabulation is supposed to be leading up to any point at all—any official point, for instance, from the police point of view and mine?"

Bluff.

Singleton languidly considered it for a moment.

"Well," he drawled, "the answer to that is 'Yes'—and 'No.'"

Riley nodded. "That *may* be English," he remarked. "Mind you, I'm not saying it isn't. I should say you've been to some swell highbrow school and learned a whole hatful. But would you mind coming down to my level and just talking sense?"

"I don't mind at all," Singleton replied, with an amiable condescension that irked Riley rather badly. No use wasting shafts of wit on a warmed-up tailor's dummy, anyhow; but sarcasm was a bad old habit of Riley's.

"That's real good of you."

"Not at all. I'll try to make the position as clear as I can."

"Do."

"Well, then, first of all, it was pure chance that I came in here to-night. You invited me in, didn't you?"

"That's so. Well?"

"I mean, I wasn't spying at the keyhole."

"No"—another flash of the old mordant wit—"I should say you weren't exactly cut out for a spy." That shaft also glanced off the Englishman's thick hide, like buckshot off a rhino.

"I didn't recognize you," Singleton drawled, "until we got inside and you took your toupee off. D'you know, Mr. Riley, you're not exactly an ordinary man, to look at?"

"You've put it kinder than some of them dagoes used to, out there," Riley admitted, passing his hand over his shiny pate. "And I do appreciate that. But go on with your story."

"Right. When I saw you in that running gun fight——"

"Fight! Ah, that's better, Mr. Superintendent! He-man stuff. Just now, you said I was being hunted, and I don't mind telling you, sir, your remark rattled me a bit. I took it as damned uncomplimentary. I may tell you, sir, that fellers who start hunting me have a whole hell of a lot of dodging to do."

"Really?" Singleton regarded him with a cool stare. "Well, I was going to say that some dago sportsman shot your sombrero off. That's why I remembered you—when you took your toupee off this evening."

"That's right," Riley agreed. "And since you're so interested in that little show, you might like to know that the dago sportsman you're mentioning'll never shoot anybody else's sombrero off!"

"Really?" Singleton favored him with another cold, distant stare—and Riley could have kicked him.

"But what about that other point, Mr. Superintendent—that official point, if any?"

"Oh, quite. I'm coming to that. D'you see, I happened to hear rather a lot about you. That was when I was in Mexico City."

"And what were you doing in Mexico City?"

"Your record," said Singleton, as if the question had escaped his languid attention, "was rather a bad one, on the whole. A ring leader, I was told, in little revolutions—gunning, and filibustering, and God knows what."

"Well," Riley snapped at him, "what about it? Mexico City hasn't been collared and corraled into your British empire yet—has it?"

"That's exactly what I mean. D'you see——"

"I'd be able to see much better, if your meaning didn't have so many wrappings round it."

"Officially," said Singleton, as if he hadn't heard the scathing comment, "officially, as superintendent of the police, I'm responsible for this district. I won't ask you what you're doing here or——"

"Tea planting," said Riley gently; and the superintendent just looked at him—for the space of about five seconds.

"Not really?" Singleton drawled. "Ah, well—I was going to say, there's a lot of trouble in Bengal. These damned Bengalis take to sedition like ducklings taking to water. God knows why, but they do. There's a lot of political trouble here. You might get mixed up in it, if you aren't careful. Force of habit, Mr. Riley, might be too much for you. D'you follow?"

"I think so. Yes, sir."

"We've had more than enough riots and things like that. One or two political murders. And a train was bombed on the G. I. P. last week. Sounds rather like the sort of thing that used to interest you in Mexico, doesn't it? D'you follow?"

"I'm certainly getting the hang of it. Yes, sir!"

Riley was becoming polite. And they used to say in Mexico City, that when Riley started being polite it was time you reached for your gun. But Singleton wouldn't know that. He just went drawling on, slow as a funeral. He said: "Good!" He seemed only anxious to explain a delicate situation in a friendly way—anxious, perhaps, to avoid more trouble in sufficiently troubled times. English rule in India, just then, was not exactly a gilt-edged security.

"I want you to think it over, Mr. Riley. I mean to say, unofficially, don't

think you can do anything—er—Mexican in my district and get away with it, because you can't. Not now. But if you lead a quiet life, there's no reason in the world why we shouldn't be friends."

While the superintendent was stating his case, Riley's thoughts were flickering through his bald pate like forked lightning. Among other dubious accomplishments, he was a tolerable play-actor, and he suddenly masked a deadly question with a hang-dog look:

"Oh, I think I get you, all right. Cutting out all the frillings, you mean police headquarters has got my record in Mexico and I'm under observation."

Then he waited anxiously, intently, for the answer upon which the superintendent's life might depend.

He wondered if this sweet official dude would fall for it. Singleton looked as if he'd fall for anything.

Lest his kindling eyes betrayed anxiety, Riley turned them away and stared through the open doors at the dark, silent jungle, thinking, rather oddly, of that hunted coolie. He drew deep breaths of the jasmine's sweet, faint scent. An uneasy deer barked twice; maybe there were big jungle cats afoot. Then Singleton answered fatally, with a vacuous laugh:

"Good Lord, man, don't be an owl! Why should we have your record here? India isn't Mexico, or the United States. There's nothing we could get you for, here. Why, nobody here knows a thing about you, except me."

Riley exhaled a deep breath, but very softly; he had learned all he wanted to know.

"Besides, if we *did* have your record, our government wouldn't do anything. We never do, in cases like yours, unless extradition is applied for—and not always then."

"You mean, you're not doing anything about it, eh?"

Singleton laughed again.

"Rather not! I tell you, there's nothing to be done. No; I'm only giving you an unofficial hint not to get yourself mixed up in any of this Bengali political ferment."

"Well, I reckon I ought to thank you for that—and I certainly do."

Singleton drawled: "Oh, don't mention it."

"But I *am* mentioning it, sir. I think it's real friendly. And I take my hat off, sir, to your great country and your British empire."

"Good Lord!" Singleton stared. "Why?"

Riley was play-acting again. He felt safe as the Bank of England now. He was beginning to enjoy himself.

"Why? Because you Britishers respect other people's political opinions. Hasn't England always been the historic haven of political exiles?"

"Well," Singleton said, "it's a bit of a sink, I know. But, on the whole, we find it doesn't work too badly. By the way, I suppose you weren't deported, Mr. Riley, were you?"

"From Mexico? No, sir. When I left Mexico, the government wasn't deporting any one at all."

"No?"

"No, sir. If a feller wasn't popular with the government, we—they just shot him. He died suddenly of lead poisoning, in the patio of the prefecture of police. Perhaps you know that shooting gallery, sir? It's near and handy to the American consulate."

But Singleton was looking rather pensive.

"Every government has its own peculiar methods," he remarked, "and some are better than others. D'you know, if I sent in a report about you to our government, with a warning note about those Mexican stunts of yours, I should only get a sarcastic reply from some civilian at headquarters. Something foul, about interfering with the liberty of subjects of a friendly nation.

Our people never stir a foot until something serious has happened and——"

But Riley wasn't listening now. It didn't matter. The amiable superintendent was only driveling about the alleged incompetency of government—the pet theme of every service man in India, ever since the days of the John Company. Riley wasn't listening because he had heard all he wanted to know. He had wanted to laugh, when that poor dude blurted out: "Nobody here knows a thing about you, except me."

That was all Riley wanted to know.

He would take devilish care nobody else ever knew.

He would shut the superintendent's big mouth—shut it with a vengeance! He had got the superintendent of police where he wanted him—made him blab, made him let the cat out of the bag.

Riley had wanted to laugh again when Singleton accepted his offer of a shakedown for the night. There was a spare room in the bungalow, with a camp bed, on the other side of the veranda—yes, he had got the superintendent where he wanted him.

Riley had made up his mind what to do about it. He had made a plan, while listening to that driveling fool, and it was going to be the easiest job of his life. He would do it right here, in this bungalow—a good eighteen miles from the next plantation.

His plan was audacious, ruthless, swiftly conceived—characteristic of the man. His mind was extraordinarily agile, swift to grasp anything and exploit it. That coolie, for instance: his plan hinged on that homicidal wretch who had run amuck, who was still at large—a murderer armed with a service revolver. Everybody in the district would know about that affair, and there would be a scare on to-night in many a lonely planter's bungalow. Riley—very luckily, it seemed to him—possessed a

service revolver, as well as his more handy automatic.

He meant to shoot the superintendent of police, and fix the crime on that wretched, prowling coolie.

Riley was an artist in that sort of thing; and it was a fairly sound scheme, as murders go. It was the audacious kind of villainy—his Mexican-Indian gunmen used to call it a frame-up—which could be staged quite as conveniently at a lonely bungalow in Bengal, as in the table-lands beyond the Sierra Madre de Dios.

There were risks, of course. But Riley had taken a chance with bigger risks, and got away with the blood money—or, to be exact, with some of it and not too much, either. For the hidden hand of his employers—those manicured hands that shoot nothing more exciting than a shirt cuff—always grabbed the lion's share of the loot.

He was facing big risks already, but with his wicked eyes wide open. In this adventure in Bengal, the risks were already bigger than they had ever been before; and so Riley was more audacious, more ruthless, more ferocious than ever.

He had snaked his way into Bengal on what is called "big business"—international business of a well-known kind which diplomats pretend they have never heard of, especially when it goes wrong. And Riley was determined that it wasn't going wrong. There was very big money in it for Riley; otherwise, he would never have risked a *coup* within the British Empire.

He did not intend to be balked now by a policeman—or by anything else on earth, or in heaven or hell. He had often boasted—and not without a certain amount of truth—that he feared neither man nor devil. So far as heaven was concerned, divine retribution had no terrors for him, because he believed—with his talented employers—that money was god. There is more red

villainy in one day's work of a secret agent like Riley than was ever dreamed of in the celluloid crook complex of all the wonder-film producers.

It was when he had concocted this devilish, murderous plan, that Riley said to himself, softly and profanely, with a wicked eye on the languid superintendent of police: "Now—now, the Lord has delivered you into my hands." But he said aloud, adjusting a new phonograph needle with the nicest care: "You'll like this record—Paderewski, playing the 'Moonlight Sonata.'"

As a matter of fact, Singleton didn't like the "Moonlight Sonata" very much. He had to hear it too often at home, played by Mrs. Singleton who was one of those indomitable pianists turned out by the Royal Academy's mass-production system. But he listened, with that blank expression of conventional politeness, until it was all over. And then he brightly asked Riley if he had the new record of "Ole Man River."

Riley's half smile had returned to his colorless lips. Perhaps he was grimly amused by these interwoven threads of tragi-comedy—the real stuff that real life is made of. And though he hated the thing, he put on a record of "Ole Man River," just to humor the superintendent's whim. Perhaps, in that horrible egglike cranium, he was thinking that a condemned man is humored in his last moments; allowed to select anything he likes for breakfast, for instance, before the executioners hustle him off to the scaffold. So he wound up the phonograph and set it going.

Singleton brightened up, almost miraculously. He had another spot of whisky, shimmied his shoulders, wagged his pomaded head, sang the chorus in a light tenor voice that really wasn't too bad.

"Ole Man River! Ole Man River!
He don't say nothin'—
He just keeps rollin',
He just keeps rollin' along."

Riley was almost pained by this light-hearted outburst. It seemed all wrong. It was hardly decent, he thought, in the circumstances. A fellow who was going to be plugged shortly had no business to sing like that. But then, of course, Singleton didn't know.

Singleton looked as if he were getting a trifle mellow, and the whisky bottle was more than half empty. He had certainly had one or two. And so had Riley; but whisky only put an edge on the killer, hardened him, stiffened him, seemed to steady his nerve. His wicked mind was very alert now.

He looked at his wrist watch. Past midnight. The thing would have to be done soon—just as soon as he could get the superintendent into the spare room on the other side of the veranda.

Riley meant to shoot him through the window, or through the open doors, as if the shot had come from the jungle. He would have to be careful about the line of fire, because there would be bullet marks for the police to see. He had worked it all out, methodically. The clues would be all right, consistent with the theory that the mad coolie had simply taken a wild pot shot from outside.

It had to be done; but—to give the devil his due—Riley had never relished the idea of shooting an unsuspecting man in cold blood—though he had done it in times past.

The phonograph stopped, and Riley began to wind it; but he paused suddenly and held his bald head aslant, listening.

"What's that?" he said.

Silence.

Singleton said:

"What? I didn't hear anything."

"I did—like something—somebody tapping on the wall. Listen——"

One's ears sang in the silence, like telegraph wires humming in the wind. For about ten seconds, Riley stood perfectly still—no longer comical to look

at, but rather impressive; a picture of the trained scout in a tight corner; vigilant poise, absolute silence, utter immobility. Presently he relaxed.

Singleton said:

"I heard nothing at all."

"Sure?"

"Not a thing. Your imagination, probably."

Riley went to the door and looked out—but not before he had moved the lamp so that he didn't stand in silhouette for anybody outside to shoot at. He did these things automatically, by instinct.

"Funny thing," he said, letting the split-cane curtain drop and returning to his seat. "It sounded quite distinct to me. Two double taps—*tap-tap! tap-tap!*—like that. And you didn't hear it?"

Looking a little more languid than usual, and a trifle bored, Singleton shook his pomaded head, and began to whistle "Ole Man River," plaintively.

A moon was rising. They could see its wan light through the interlaced tree-tops of the jungle.

"I reckon it was nothing," Riley continued. "My imagination, like you said. You can imagine all sorts of things, at night, in a God-forsaken hole like this."

"I know. Gives me the creeps, sometimes. By the way, I suppose you're not superstitious, are you?"

"Why?" Riley was thinking of what he had to do. His eyes were puckered, half closed, and his set face showed every year of his age, and more. He was feeling the strain. It was different from drawing trigger on your man in a heady rush to see who could be first with his gun—this waiting about, this suspense—waiting—small talk about superstition.

"Some people believe it's a sign of death—an omen," Singleton was saying, rather brightly.

"What is it? What the hell are you talking about?"

"Why, when a fellow hears mysterious rappings, and there's—er—nobody there—that sort of thing."

"Huh! Who told you all that bilge?"

"Oh, lots of people believe it."

"Some guys'll believe any old bunk. Do you?"

"Me? Good Lord, no! But a rather murky bird told me at Poona, one day, that he had heard the death tap every night for three weeks. Got him down, too. Bosh, of course."

But Riley was interested in spite of himself. And he asked a question:

"Well? And did anybody die?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"He did."

"No! What happened to him?"

"We hanged him." Singleton twisted his head sidewise, shut his eyes, and grimaced horribly. Then he opened his sleepy, light-blue eyes again, smiled vacuously, and continued: "It was in Poona jail, you know. He'd murdered a Eurasian girl. And he swore she used to glide into his cell every night, and just stand there and look at him. Poor chap was dippy; must have been."

Riley was silent for a while. Then he stood up abruptly.

"Reckon it's about time we turned in," he said. "I'll show you your room."

"Right-o! Think I'll take a book along with me, if you don't mind. I always like to have a read, last thing at night."

Glancing along the book shelves, he selected a film edition of "The Sheik."

The spare room was a Spartan affair, with camp furniture of green canvas and deal—a bed, a bath and a stool. There was a table by the open doors, and a canvas deck chair.

Riley put the lamp down on the table; and when the superintendent had lugged off his field boots and settled in the chair with his novel, Riley left him, with a rather curt, "Good night."

Riley went to his own den and worked methodically at his preparations, a glitter in his half-closed eyes, and his mouth askew.

First, he selected a key from an odd-looking bunch and unlocked a mahogany pistol case. The big, heavy Colt was always kept clean, oiled, loaded; ready for service at any moment. But, though he knew the Colt was loaded, he satisfied himself—just for luck—with a quick squint into the cylinder chambers, and nodded his shiny, bald head when he glimpsed the brass cartridge cases and bullets.

Next, he glanced at the filtered moonshine and shadow under the trees, and decided that khaki drill might be conspicuous. So he donned an old blue Burberry, and covered his shiny head with a black beret. He was a careful workman. A pair of rubber shoes completed his make-up. He slipped the big Colt into his coat pocket. He was ready.

The lamp in his den dimmed and went out. An undersized, skulking figure of darkness glided down the veranda steps and was swallowed up in the murk of the jungle. He could see the lamp in Singleton's room—a dim light, but Riley had a marvelous eye. It showed enough shooting light, for him. Once he had shot at a sound in the dark, and hit it.

Now, he drew his gun and cocked it so gently that there wasn't a sound when the oily hammer engaged. He could see Singleton lounging in the canvas deck chair—the bulge of his back and the shape of his head. A barn-door target.

The jungle was sunk in a deep silence, as if in breathless suspense.

Riley took a quick look around. He could see the twinkling lights of the police outpost, a mile away. The sound of the shot would soon fetch them. He licked his dry lips. Well, let 'em come. He had his tale ready. He would bluff

them. He would send 'em off on a wild-goose chase. Let 'em come!

But he was not so steady now. Rather shaken up, already. Not as young as he used to be. His palms were moist. There was an ooze of clammy sweat on his temples and forehead. A drop trickled in his eye. He wiped it away. Was his nerve going? he wondered. Getting a trifle old, maybe. Age and whisky. But he pulled himself together, eying his human target viciously—but he was picturing Singleton sitting happily in that other room, singing:

"Ole Man River—
He don't say nothin'——"

Riley wasn't normal now. Imagination—you can imagine all sorts of things in a God-forsaken hole like this—God-forsaken—imagination—hell! His jaw jutted out. He lifted the pistol, his forefinger curling around the trigger.

There was a stunning explosion that remained in his startled ears, deafeningly. As the heavy weapon kicked viciously, he uttered a sharp cry! He felt as if his shoulder and arm and hand had been fiercely flogged with leather thongs tipped with lead. That lamp in the door was dancing dizzily, and the earth rocked——

The next thing he remembered was the splash of cold water in his face. And a bearded havildar of Sikh police was leaning over him grimly.

Two native stretcher bearers carried him away, but he knew **very** little about it. Faint and dazed, all he remembered clearly was that blinding flash.

Official conversation on the police telephone:

"Singleton speaking. Morning, chief. I've got him. Sold him our pup, and he bought it according to plan. Thought I was a stranger, and he took me in.

. . . What? . . . Oh, rather not. Government would only have given us the bird, if we had merely reported that he was a dangerous alien. Now that 'he's shown his paces, they'll have to turf him out. Bright idea? . . . Well, not too bad, sir. But Cheng was the star turn—not I. Yes, Cheng's a useful chap. Job couldn't have been done better in the armorer's shop. . . . What? . . . Why, he choked the barrel of Riley's Colt—in case he did start that gunman stuff—and it simply burst to blazes in the fellow's hand. . . . What? . . . No, he isn't badly hurt. Oh, by the way, there was just one little hitch. When Cheng gave me a tap on the wall to signal that he had faked the gun, Riley heard."

The superintendent smiled faintly, with a sidelong glance at the open door at his elbow. Riley was just outside, between a couple of grim Sikh constables.

"I say, sir, you'll yell when you see him. He's a scream. Spindle-shanked, undersized clown, with a comic nose and a head like an egg——"

And Riley—whose long suit was listening—heard his own official description. His bald head heavily bandaged, his right arm in a sling, his colorless lips drawn back in a canine snarl, he looked uglier than ever, when the superintendent came out of his office.

"You!" Riley snarled, and paused for breath—or for inspiration, perhaps—before letting it rip. "You cold-blooded, slippery, fishy-eyed——"

The languid superintendent regarded him with a distant stare, thrust his hands into the cross pockets of his marvelous imported breeches, and sauntered away, gently singing to himself:

"Ole Man River! Ole Man River!
He don't say nothin'—
He just keeps rollin',
He just keeps rollin' along!"

Riley had always hated that low-brow song.

The POPULAR CLUB

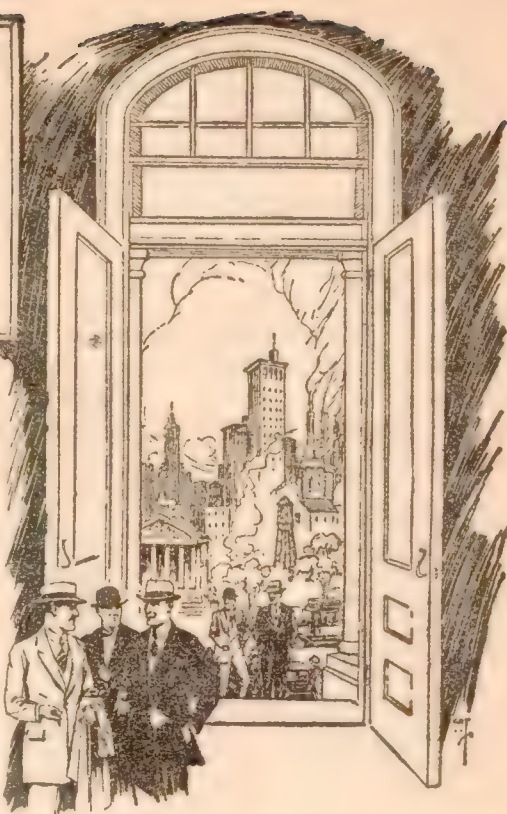
NATURALLY all of the letters that an editor gets do not contain words of praise. We are happy to say that the overwhelming majority of those that come to us are of a complimentary nature. But when the other kind come, they are very welcome, too—especially if they are good-natured, as is usually the case. But not always. The letter from Mr. A. J. Draper, of San Fernando, California, which we print in part below, is of service principally because it has elicited a really interesting and informative letter from Member John Talbot Lynch, author of a short dog story that met with Mr. Draper's disfavor:

Whippets do not run over five-eighths of a mile, and greyhounds are shorter winded, and run shorter heats, while he has them doing three-quarters and even a mile.

Again, greyhounds are not much on the fight. Their job for generations has been to chase the timid hare, and what fighting they do is snap and slash—no bulldog grip in theirs.

Then, do you think that valuable racing dogs are turned loose for kids to play with, and that electrically motored mechanical hares are left lying around when not in use? Of course the dog had to be spoiled to fit the plot, but it was a very clumsy way to do it.

Whew! Well, here's what Member Lynch, the author, has to say. (The name, by the way, of the story that all the shootin's about is "The Greyhound Clown," and it was published in the Second January Number):



Our critic, A. J. Draper, of California, attributes the characteristics of whippets to greyhounds, and vice versa. The whippets, which dogs are the issue of a cross between a greyhound and a terrier, are the short-distance runners. They are remarkable two-hundred-yard sprinters, at which distance they can whip the authors of their existence. But in longer heats they are absolutely no match for them; for the greyhounds can go at least a mile at top speed, while the whippets spend themselves in a little over two hundred yards.

Prior to the advent of the electrically driven hare, greyhound coursing took place on open and frequently rough ground, with the sportsmen following on horseback, and a real live hare speeding and swerving before the dogs. A hare has great speed. Its swerving tactics cost its pursuers many additional yards, as most dogs, when swinging along at top speed, naturally run along for quite a stretch before they can check themselves. In countless cases "brownie" flew around for a mile before the end came. And many a hare has succeeded in saving his skin—chiefly, though, by managing to get out of sight, for it is by sight *only* that a greyhound hunts.

A few days ago an Irish gentleman told me of a greyhound—an Irish one—that pursued a hare eight miles, and collapsed on the bank of a river into which brownie had flung itself. This is no “fish story,” I’ll warrant. I have myself seen the hounds of English and Irish sportsmen tire out the horses. And like all British Islers, I wouldn’t give a tinker’s curse, as they say in Ireland, for the hound that would give up after two miles.

Our critic is quite correct, though, when he asserts that greyhounds are snap-and-slash fighters. But he errs when he claims they are “not much on the fight.” A true greyhound will battle till it drops dead. It fights scientifically; somewhat like our retired heavy, you might say. And in a rough-and-tumble encounter with an animal of its own size and strength, it will go for the throat like an Irish wolfhound or a Scottish deerhound.

An English soldier, whose name escapes me at the moment, tells of a greyhound of his hunting jackals—and “murdering” them, if you please, after engaging in regular bulldog scrimmages! Teddy Roosevelt, also, tells of his hunting coyotes with greyhounds. The dogs, he tells us, worried the coyote over a distance of three miles, attacking incessantly at long range, and leaving the final encounter, of course, to a slow-moving but powerful Great Dane.

This proves conclusively that greyhounds are anything but short-winded runners and timid hunters. Also, that they certainly are the devil “on the fight,” though not strictly fighting dogs.

The whippet is a delicately constructed animal. Originally, and only a few generations

ago, it was known as a “snap dog,” and was used by English mining folk to hunt rabbits. It first came into being by way of a chance romance between some dashing greyhound and some good-looking but unknown English terrier. A bright mining man made the great discovery. And as the “manufacturing” process was continued, the blood of the Italian greyhound was blended with that of the terrier and English greyhound. Thus has the whippet the tenacity of the terrier, the speed of the greyhound, and the wheel-back of the Italian hound. So that it is to-day the world’s top-notch sprinter.

Now I hope I have made myself sufficiently clear, and that you may be able to glean something from this note which will please our critic—which I doubt much. Refer him to the “Encyclopedia of Sports.” He will find in it the complete A B C of whippet racing and greyhound racing, with the sole exception of the new-fangled idea, the electric hare; that being not yet incorporated in it.

As to “the dog being spoiled to fit the plot,” I should say that it was rather a case of the plot being designed to fit the spoiled dog. It was a most disgraceful thing to do—leaving Yankee Lad unwatched—the boss going off on sprees. But then, worse and less creditable things happen.

Every reader of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE, man or woman, qualifies as a lover of good stories and as a good fellow, and is therefore automatically and entirely without obligation elected a member of THE POPULAR CLUB.

Editors,
The Popular Magazine,
79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Dear Sirs:

I liked, in this issue, the following stories:

Best: _____

Third: _____

Next: _____

Fourth: _____

My favorite type of story is:

Name: Member _____

Address: _____

Note: Any further comments will be very welcome. Special consideration is given to the preferences of our readers as expressed in their communications.

A Chat With You

DO you sometimes regret that you cannot get out and go to far places, having adventures such as you read about, living a stirring and colorful life? Do you feel that you are only a stay-at-home, engaged in prosaic work, dwelling in a town so familiar to you that it has lost its glamour? Do you feel inferior to those daring men who penetrate the forests, ford the streams, sail the oceans and climb the mountains? Do you keep quiet while others, who have traveled and done things, tell of their experiences?

Well—don't. Why should you? The very fact that you are a reader of this magazine proves that you are as daring, as keen, as imaginative at heart as any intrepid soldier of fortune. You have the spirit, and it's the spirit that counts.

* * * *

THESE stories that we publish, splendid as they are, would be wasted if you were not as you are. The reader makes half the story. It is your eyes that follow the words, your brain on which the sentences are recorded, your heart to which the drama and characters appeal, your spirit which has answered to the thrilling call of adventure.

If it were not so, you would not be reading these pages. If it were not so, you would not be feeling a quickening of the pulse whenever you glance at a circus poster on the wayside. And if it were not so, you would not become instantly alert and intent when you hear the sustained, hoarse, but in some way beautiful, bellow of a liner as it leaves the dock for the other hemisphere. Something inside of you makes you take a great interest in many things outside of your work and your daily life.

PEOPLE used to look down on book-worms. It was felt that a man who got his knowledge of life out of the words of other men, knew nothing about life. It is true to a certain extent. Any sensible person is ready to admit that first-hand contact with life is the greatest school in the world, but it can't be denied that such contact is not enough. There must be more.

The man who has had experience, and has enriched his mind with the stories and thoughts of other experienced people, enjoys a wonderful advantage over his colorless and unimaginative neighbor. All the explorers and men of deeds who capture our admiration are those who are dashing, intriguing figures. It is so with our favorite characters in fiction—Robinson Crusoe, Robin Hood, the Count of Monte Cristo, D'Artagnan, Ivanhoe, and many more.

* * * *

YOU see, the point is this: By reading worth-while, authentic, interesting stories, you get not only entertainment, but a wide knowledge of places, a deeper understanding of people of all kinds, and thousands of ideas and images that make you see all things about you in a new light. You do not then go through life with your nose to the grindstone, living a dull and drab life. Instead, you become observant; you see more than just the job or the sidewalk or the flat range. You realize that there is a sky above you, a world about you. People become interesting; places take on a new meaning. And when you speak, people listen to you, because you are a person with ideas and a mind full of matters worth listening to.

WE have just told you about your end of it—how you, as the reader, figure in the making of a magazine. Let us tell you now about this end of it, which has to do with the authors and editors who create and select what you read.

Were we wrong, in the last Chat, in saying that this issue was to be so good? Surely, there is nothing in this whole number of which either editors or authors need be ashamed. Every story here, we think, has the punch. And no magazine could contain more variety.

Below we have placed the contents of the First April issue. It will satisfy you just as this one must have.

* * * *

MC MORROW'S novel is so odd and different that to tell much about it would be to give away the secret. We can only say that it concerns a

group of people who become castaways in a wild, weird conveyance, adrift—No, the temptation to give it away is too great; you wait and read the story.

You'll be glad to see the announcement of a new yarn by Fred MacIsaac. It is a short story, but a good one—about an American broke in Peru. A serial by MacIsaac will start in the issue after the next, by the way.

There ought to be more room here to commend in full the excellence of Edmund Arthur Malone's humorous darky story, Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's romantic, exciting two-parter, laid in the Philippines, Pickering's fine jewel tale, and Hemmingway's authentic prophecy about the boxing game. We would like, too, to speak of James Stevens, Leonard Lupton, and L. Patrick Greene. But there isn't room, and all we can do is to say that if you miss any story in that number, you'll be missing something that—well, that shouldn't have been missed for worlds.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

In the First April Number—1929

Castaways of the Clouds

Wanted—An American

"All I Needs Is a Dollar"

The Scarlet Masque

In Two Parts—Part I

The Mountjoy Legacy

The New Rickard Is on His Way

Blow-in

Mrs. Murphy's Chowder

The Modern Vigilantes

In Five Parts—Part V

A. E. F.

The Popular Club

A Chat with You

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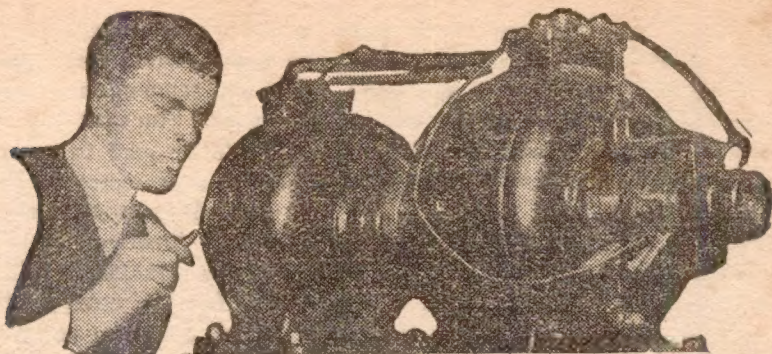
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Amazingly Easy Way to get into ELECTRICITY

Don't spend your life waiting for \$5 raises in a dull, hopeless job. Now... and forever... say good-bye to 25 and 35 dollars a week. Let me teach you how to prepare for positions that lead to \$50, \$60 and on up to \$200 a week in Electricity—NOT by correspondence, but by an amazing way to teach that makes you an electrical expert in 90 days! Getting into electricity is far easier than you imagine!

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No dull books, no baffling charts, no classes, you get individual training... all real actual work... building real batteries... winding real armatures, operating real motors, dynamos and generators, wiring houses, etc.,



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Here are a few of hundreds of positions open to Coyne-trained men. Our free employment bureau gives you lifetime employment service.

| | |
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| Service Station Owner | \$200 a wk. |
| Radio Expert | \$100 a Week |
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etc. That's a glimpse of how we help to make you a master electrician, and fit you to hold big jobs after graduation.

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Our employment department gives you lifetime service. Two weeks after graduation Clyde F. Hart got a position as electrician with the Great Western Railroad at over \$100 a week. That's not unusual. We can point to many Coyne men making up to \$600 a month. \$60 a week is only the beginning of your opportunity.

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Inside back cover

H A V E A C A M E L



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